CHRIST·IN·ART

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CHRIST IN ART

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LEONARDO DA VINCI. — HEAD OF CHRIST.
(A Study for the Last Supper.)
Brera Gallery, Milan.

Christ in Art

By

Joseph Lewis French

Illustrated

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TO

M. F. O.

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

FOREWORD.

Out of religion, which may be broadly defined as the stronger elements of the human soul, concentrating first in fear, then in superstition, and finally in faith, has mainly sprung not only such art as the world knows to-day, but much that is lost for ever. It is but the natural law of progression — the law that set the stars in their courses — that the fear of ages ago, which first implanted a god in the breast of primeval man, should have passed through the fiery furnace of superstition finally to triumph as the faith which is the corner-stone of the Christian religion.

The subject of the Christ is thus un-

doubtedly the greatest that has ever entered into the domain of Art. As proof of its importance, and of the high service to religion of its handmaiden, Art, in the Christian cycles, there has never been, and never can be, a greatest picture of the Saviour, one on which the verdict of all Time will be united, but a series of them. Those representations which have best satisfied the ideal of their time belong in this category. The present brochure is simply a brief effort to set down in order some of the attempts that have been made, under varying degrees of inspiration and influence, to picture the Saviour and His life-work.

JOSEPH LEWIS FRENCH.

BOSTON, August 15, 1899.

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I

INTRODUCTION

"For don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have
passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.

. . . . . .

If I drew higher things with the same truth,
That were to take the Prior's pulpit place,
Interpret God to all of you."

"Fra Lippo Lippi" — Browning.

CHRIST IN ART.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE earliest Christians, in their total reaction from the æstheticism of pagan life, counted the mere sense of beauty as some sort of a personal sin, and for nearly thirteen centuries what survived of Christian art was without any special appeal to the finer senses. Thus Art perished almost utterly in the Dark Ages, only to be revived as the spirit of the mighty Greeks again resumed its sway over the minds of men.

The first four or five centuries of the Christian era consequently make for little in any chronicle of religious art. Aside from some almost obliterated and very rude paintings in the Catacombs of Rome, representing a quite narrow range of subjects, a few scarce bas-relief ornamentations of the tombs of the great, and certain rare fragments of mosaic work found in the churches, there is nothing left to us of the very earliest period.

The most notable art monument of the first five centuries of the Christian era is the carved ivory throne of the Bishop Maximian, which is standing to-day in the Cathedral of Ravenna. The representations are a series of bas-relief panels divided between scenes in the life of St. John the Baptist, the life of Joseph (the patriarch), and the life of our Saviour.

The first important memorial which we still possess of the second period of Christian art, beginning about the commencement of the sixth century, are some mosaics in the remains of another early basilica in Ravenna, the Church of S. Apollinare Nuovo. This relic consists of twenty-two scenes taken wholly from the life and ministry of Christ. These are still in a very fair state of preservation, and constitute a starting-point in the record of religious symbolism that is almost beyond value to the art student and the historiographer.

It was about the time of their origin that the era of church building began, whose crown was to come from the hand of Michael Angelo in the rounding of the dome of St. Peter's. Monasteries also multiplied. It was an age of great religious fervour, which is, indeed, the chief vital characteristic, the living spark, of

the whole period known as the Dark Ages. The Church was all in all to the people, and, as edifices dedicated to the faith arose, means to adorn and beautify them gradually increased. The fundamental spirit of this decoration was the exposition of the meaning of Christ and His life. The chief idea in decorating a new cathedral was indeed the same in all essentials of conception as that which exists to this very day. Certain scenes from the historic life of our Lord were selected and worked out in painting, in mosaic, and in carvings of wood, bronze, ivory, or stone.

The subjects were rigidly selected by a council of ecclesiastics, and the artist, in the present-day sense, was almost wholly an artisan. Examples of this period are, unfortunately, as rare as those of the earliest one. To the Church of St. George, at Oberzell, in Germany, the

traveller must make his pilgrimage to find the oldest relic. This is a series of frescoes, attributed to the tenth century, which forms a frieze over the nave of the church.

The next remaining traces of mediæval Christian art are two centuries later, and can be seen in the church at Vic, in the department of the Indre et Loire, in France. Only four colours, white, red, yellow, and black, were used in painting even this comparatively late example, and while considerable life is manifested in the spirit of the composition, the drawing is very harsh and crude.

The Gaeta column, still standing in front of the Gaeta cathedral, is the most interesting and remarkable remnant of the mediæval period existing in Italy. This is a marble pillar twenty feet high, supported on the backs of carved lions. All of its four sides are sculptured with

sacred subjects. It was at this period that the stained glass window, of which some beautiful early examples are still extant in France particularly, was first employed to teach religious object-lessons.

This was also the era of illuminated manuscripts, on single copies of which a monk often toiled a lifetime, but which were the treasured possessions of the monasteries and the nobles, and were almost inaccessible to the people. The ownership of a rich missal was as much coveted in the Dark Ages as the possession of a splendid mansion would be to-day.

The use of all these mediums gradually and naturally concentred in the employment of the easiest and most readily accessible form of representation, — paintings, — mural and otherwise.

The art of painting had slowly progressed till at the close of the thirteenth

century it had superseded all other forms. Examples of this period are, however, of little interest save to the art student and the religious historian. Only with the dawn of the Italian Renaissance does the subject become of relative importance to the general peoples of civilisation. All of the Italian masters of this and the succeeding periods, and most of those of Northern Europe, may be studied with profit and, in most instances, with delight by the average person of to-day.

The story of Christian art, so far as it interests us of the beginning of the twentieth century, opens picturesquely — inspirationally even — with that joyous procession that on a certain summer day, at the close of the thirteenth century, carried the Madonna of Cimabue in triumph to its resting-place in the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. This, the first recorded achievement of

the ideal over the ascetic spirit, marked the awakening of a new birth of meaning in the Holy Emblems in the breasts of the people.

The first really great impulse toward what we know as modern art, however, came from the hand of Giotto, who in 1306 finished the great frescoes which still adorn the Chapel of the Arena at Padua. A genuine attempt to seriously introduce human character into painting will be found in these works, which, so long as they remain decipherable, constitute a priceless relic of the first period of modern art. While it is scarcely likely that Giotto used the living model, which indeed was not freely done for a couple of centuries following, he made bold to employ his wonderful power of seeing human life in the people around him, in the treatment of the character and ministry of the Saviour.

GHIRLANDAJO. — CHRIST CALLING ST. PETER AND ST. ANDREW

Another great painter of this period, Fra Angelico, who immediately followed Giotto, showed more of a return to the earlier ascetic manner in treatment, but his long series of works remain, nevertheless, masterpieces of spiritual conception.

A reference to the era preceding the true Renaissance would be incomplete without the mention of the marvellous work of Ghiberti, in bronze, which still forms the doors of the Baptistery of Florence. The life of Christ is here depicted in twenty scenes. These gates, of which many replicas adorn art museums the world over, are doubtless more or less familiar to the general reader.

The most important contribution of this period of æsthetic awakening to Christian art in the Holy City was the series of frescoes for the walls of the Sistine Chapel, for which a number of painters were summoned from the provinces to Rome.

Such was the development of painting at the opening of the sixteenth century that the greater artists, more sure of their craft, began to devote themselves to specially selected subjects from the life of Christ rather than to the employment, as in most instances previously, of years of labour on a more or less complete series for the adornment of a single edifice. The generation immediately following thus produced what we acknowledge to-day to be the early, and in many respects the still unsurpassed, masterpieces of Christian art. To this period belong the splendid works of Michael Angelo, of Leonardo Da Vinci, of Raphael, and of Titian.

Tintoretto, alone of all the great masters of this the golden age of Italian painting, set his hand to a whole series after the example of Giotto and the earliest masters. These constitute that splendid set of fres-

TITIAN. — THE REDEEMER.

coes which adorns the Cathedral of San Rocco at Venice.

Passing over three centuries, we note the somewhat curious circumstance that this art serial treatment of the life of Christ is revived in our own. There have been four important examples of this great undertaking, of which Doré's Bible is known to the masses of civilisation, and a notable series of more than four hundred pictures has only within four years been completed by James Tissot, of Paris, the originals of which were only last year exhibited in this country.

In modern religion, Art, if the plain truth is accepted, has always been more or less of an anomaly, in many cases a decided outcast.

There are whole orders to this day whose churches are unadorned by a single religious painting. But two indeed of all the enlightened sects of Christendom have

steadily and conscientiously conserved Art from the beginning. To the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal denominations belongs all the credit for keeping alight through the centuries the torch of Art as a religious emblem.

It is within the memory of the present generation that so much as a stained glass memorial window has been admitted into the churches of the dissenting denominations. Since the days of Martin Luther all forms of religion have looked askance upon Art save the Roman Catholic Church and its sister institution. The causes are not far to seek. The sense of beauty as an attribute of living has, since the sturdy Reformer who stood for a renascence of the early Christian spirit, been regarded chiefly in the light of a snare and a temptation. The harking back to old Hebraic standards, which was also one of the chief notes of the Refor-

mation, reinstated that ideal of Supreme Divinity, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who is ever revealed as a stern God, whose exactions are, before all, obedience and self-sacrifice. The character of the Christ, instinct with beauty of so complete and commanding a type that, on the revival of the æsthetic instinct in the breasts of mankind, coeval with the Italian Renaissance, it became the chief inspirational motive of Art, was overshadowed throughout a considerable area of civilisation by the stern message of Luther and of Calvin.

The value and stimulus of the æsthetic motive as an aid to religious inspiration is becoming of late years, however, more and more acknowledged. The chief form which it has thus far assumed in many denominations which had entirely prohibited Art from their foundation, aside from a highly cultivated musical service,

which has been introduced only within a couple of decades, is the stained glass window. Examples of fine quality are now found in the churches of the Unitarian, the Baptist, the Presbyterian and other sects. The most important of these are the fruits of the long career of John la Farge, which is, thus far, the only generally known name in the very brief history of religious painting in America, although some recent important works by Abbott Thayer and George Hitchcock seem to promise the dawn of a native tradition. The followers of John Wesley still hold noticeably aloof, although a more liberal spirit in the use of colour in the decoration of their recent churches, and of music, even to the introduction of works by masters who wrote wholly under the inspiration of Roman Catholicism, is decidedly apparent.

The day of a general revival of religious

art is perhaps not far distant. Mural decoration is undoubtedly at this moment the leading art motive in the United States. The acknowledged beginnings of a national art are, it is confidently hoped, apparent in this feeling. And the chief, the inevitable centre of inspiration must come as it came in the days of the pontiffs of the Italian Renaissance, from the Church.

There are other sects of power and influence to-day, beside the only one which existed in the time of Raphael, and it is an important sign for the revival of great art, that these have begun to encourage the painter, the sculptor, and the designer. Out of the darkness of indifference to the great messages held in solution by sound and form and colour, which has lain like a ban on Protestant communities since the Reformation, we are gradually emerging as a whole relig-

ious people. And the event prophesies a more splendid day for Art than the world has ever before known.

The æsthetic spirit has gradually become a commanding influence in general civilisation, and, aided by the great accessions to the resources of technique, which have been developed within the past half-century, it has given us from the hands of a few of the European masters some of the most important contributions to religious painting that have been produced.

II.

THE CHRIST-CHILD

It was the winter wild
When the heaven-born child,
All meanly wrapt, in the rude manger lies.
Nature in awe of him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great master so to sympathise.

"Hymn to the Nativity" — Milton.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRIST-CHILD.

THE key-note of our Lord's character, humility, is epitomised in the circumstances of His birth. Save the visit of the Wise Men, the whole scene is in every detail of the lowliest character. For the purposes of art treatment this is a particular advantage, and it has been well remarked in this connection, of the manger at Bethlehem, that "the bedchamber of a prince would be commonplace in comparison."

As in most other instances, Giotto was the innovator in a treatment of the scene that had remained traditional for centuries. From the unnatural stiffness of

mediæval representations he departed so far as to depict, for the first time, something of the genuine atmosphere of motherhood, the Mother in all his examples bearing a perfectly natural relation to the Child in the scene. Many Nativities immediately following his time degenerated into Adorations, the principal motive of which was the representation of Mary kneeling before the Babe in an attitude of worship. Hans Memling, Dürer, and the Northern masters in general followed the example of the Italian painters of the period in thus rendering the scene.

There are, nevertheless, many great contributions to Art in this class of Nativities. Andrea Della Robbia's fine group in marble in the Convent of La Verna, Italy, is one of the masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture, full of the most exquisite human beauty, wedded to the

charm of religious feeling. One of Fra Filippo Lippi's pictures represents the Mother thus adoring the Holy Babe, and is called the Virgin in the Wood. This is not a Nativity, although so close to the subject that it must be referred to here as one of the great early religious paintings. It is now in the Berlin Gallery. The Florentine school gives us the best early examples of the Nativity in the work of Botticelli, Perugino, and others. Correggio's La Notte, in the Dresden Gallery, has for generations been the most popular of all pictures of the subject.

One of the best known of the Nativities of the early Northern painters is the work of Roger Van Der Weyden, who was born in 1480. This grand painting, full of deep sincerity, and splendid in colouring, is now in the Museum at Berlin.

The greatest presentation of the theme

in Art, however, is nevertheless conceded to be the modern one, and the chief honour perhaps belongs to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, whose Nativity in the Episcopal church at Torquay, in England, would alone have made his fame as a religious painter. The other examples of this master, all employed as mural decorations, one of which is in a church in Rome, are scarcely inferior.

Fritz Von Uhde's Holy Night is memorable among modern German pictures of the subject. Le Rolle's Arrival of the Shepherds is the best of the modern French works. This is a very simple, direct conception that is treated in a strikingly original way.

The Adoration of the Magi was, in the order of events in the life of Christ, the first sacred theme to really enthrall the imagination of the opening period of the Renaissance. The possibilities of the scene

Le Rolle. — Arrival of the Shepherds.

were an open invitation to a gorgeous revel of technique which was promptly taken advantage of. Gentile da Fabriano's The Adoration of the Kings, the earliest prominent example of this class of pictures, was painted for the sacristy of La Trinita in Florence, about 1420. Fabriano plunges at once into magnificence of the most extreme type in his figures of the kings, the foremost one of whom, as if to point the antithesis, kneels to kiss the protruding foot of the Christ-child. Perugino, it is stated, painted the the subject *con amore* as a mural decoration, and more than once. For a hundred years the Adoration was a favourite subject of the Florentine school, reaching high-water mark in the conceptions of Botticelli and his pupil, Filippino Lippi. Botticelli painted four known Adorations, of which that in the Uffizi in Florence contains the portraits of Cosimo, Giuli-

ano, and Giovanni de Medici, his noble patrons.

The Venetian style was peculiarly well-adapted to cope with that gorgeous treatment of this subject which is a tradition of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Bonifazio, Veronese, and Tintoretto are among the masters of the Venetian school who have added to their fame by it.

The "superlative degree of elaboration" is exhibited in the Procession of the Magi, a fresco in the Riccardi Palace, at Florence. This is simply a splendid cortège of the nobles and dignitaries of Florence in the fifteenth century. The detailed description of this single work will give a succinct idea of the depth and freedom of invention which the Renaissance of painting in Italy had achieved by the middle of the fifteenth century.

There is first to the left of the approach to the manger a choir of angels. These are painted individually, each head from life, with strong feeling, and are a most interesting study in themselves. At the right is seen the procession winding in toward the place where the Babe lies. Riding at the head, on a richly caparisoned white mule, is the venerable Patriarch of Constantinople, attended by the heads of the Church, who are followed by the chief dignitaries of the Republic, apparelled as become their state, and attended by pages and outriders. This is a marvellous collection of contemporary portraits, as indeed may be stated of the whole fresco, so far as the human faces are concerned. In the centre of the cortège, with a clear space about him, so as to give the proper distinction, appears a striking and magnificent figure mounted on a large white stallion, — here introduced

as the second of the three kings, and a portrait of the Greek Emperor John Paleologus.

All the sports of the field — hunting, hawking — are represented as in progress in the background of the picture as the procession moves along, and hawks, hounds, hunting leopards held in leash, and all the paraphernalia of the chase are shown. To be in itself a complete panorama of noble sport out-of-doors, the composition lacks only the presence of ladies. The spirit of this company is grave, yet buoyant. There is no attempt at the introduction of religious feeling, save in the faces of the ecclesiastics, in which as an element of correct portraiture it is inevitable. A motley crowd of all conditions of men and boys brings up the rear of the cortège, precisely the same as follows a street procession to this day. The landscape through which this gor-

geous train winds its way is rich, varied, curiously composed, in that it introduces almost every variety of flora and many of fauna then known.

The painter, Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1498), was a favourite pupil of Fra Angelico. Vasari's description seems to fit him exactly. "He was of great invention, very fertile in animals, in perspective, in landscape, and in ornament."

This amazing work, begun probably in 1459, occupies three walls of the chapel of the Riccardi Palace, the fourth being completed by the actual scene of the Adoration. The painting is to-day almost as fresh as when completed. W. J. Stillman, who visited it in 1892, remarks: "It is the most extraordinary agglomeration of *pose plastique* in all the range of the Renaissance. It is such a collection of unquestionable portraits as I do not know elsewhere in the world."

There are in the work many faults of composition which Gozzoli afterward relinquished, but this instance will serve very well to show that the utmost range of invention and the freest use of the living model had been finally attained.

If the reader would study an Adoration of the Shepherds, a theme which has often been rendered of itself by religious painters of all times, let him see the picture of that name by Domenico Ghirlandajo, a noble early Renaissance painter in the Academy at Florence. He will find the whole composition somewhat curious, perhaps. The chief one of the shepherds looks very much like a statesman; there is some strange rich architecture for a manger scene, and the attitudes of both Joseph and Mary are somewhat stiff. But if there is reverence for the common creed in his soul anywhere, he will find it growing up in him as he looks upon this

sweet, serious, earnest delineation. He will get some idea what a deep living thing religion was with some of these old Italian masters, and how the seeking after divinity has preserved their art to us, and makes beautiful in it much that is quite repellant to modern notions of taste.

That classic modern French painter, Bouguereau, to span several centuries and come down to yesterday, has a rich and beautiful composition called The Adoration of the Magi in the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Paris, which probably fills the general popular ideal of to-day in the fullest measure.

A great work in our own country in religious painting has been done by John La Farge, who has a grand picture called The Arrival of the Magi at Bethlehem, in the Church of the Incarnation in New York City.

Of the life of Mary after the birth of

our Lord we know but little. There is only a glimpse here and there in the Gospels. Hers is the crown of meekness over all women. Her sweet spiritual presence seems to hover ever in the background, the embodiment of the apotheosis of self-sacrifice.

The portrayal of the Madonna in Art is therefore necessarily but a shadowy conception compared to the living, vital presence of the Saviour Himself. There is, indeed, but one other figure of His time who can be classed with Him, St. John the Baptist.

There are but two events in the life of our Lord subsequent to the Nativity in which Mary appears in general art, — the Flight into Egypt and the Finding of Christ in the Temple. The former is a monumental subject, so far as regards the number of pictures of it that have been made. The list of them is the roll-call of

CORREGGIO. — REPOSE IN EGYPT.

the painters, from Giotto, and before, to the men of to-day, in some cases answered to half a dozen times.

Giotto's picture, which is part of the Arena Chapel frescoes at Padua, is one of the best known and most often reproduced of all examples of his style. This, as many of the earlier pictures, has a figure of a guiding angel poised in the air above the scene. Fra Angelico's general composition (the picture is in the Florence Academy) is of much the same cast as Giotto's. Both seek to stir, first of all, a deeply religious sentiment in the beholder. Albert Dürer, as his contribution to the general theme, chose to treat the sojourn in Egypt. It is handled in his usual realistic manner, and is part of his Little Passion series. Rembrandt, who revelled in shadow, and therefore loved night scenes, made a painting of the Flight, which is preserved in the Berlin Gallery. It is not

one of the great works of religious art, being very much in the Dutch method which was wider of the mark set by the Renaissance painters than that of any other school. Yet the picture is of great value as possessing the general unmistakable qualities of this master.

Tintoretto's picture in the series of frescoes in the Cathedral of San Rocco, at Venice, is notable among all the Italian works for the special care and pains he has bestowed upon the landscape. This remark applies also to the Madonna, the artist, like many another of his period, choosing to regard the legend as rather belonging to the life of Mary than that of our Lord.

To speak of a single picture which seems indeed to apotheosise the artistic possibilities of the subject, and which has been somewhat widely characterised as "the greatest religious picture

of our time," the work of Holman Hunt, first exhibited in 1888, recurs instantly. The presentation of the subject here is altogether ideal, although the groundwork of the composition evinces the closest attention to contemporary details. The key-note of the picture is that of joyous expectation, a sentiment which lifts it quite out of the plane of all other Flights which are treated without exception from the standpoint of semi-tragedy. It is this very unexpected manner which has undoubtedly contributed chiefly to give the work its popular acclaim.

Two other notable modern pictures are the In the Shadow of Isis of Luc Olivier Merson, a religious work of which the close of the nineteenth century has reason to be proud. The Flight into Egypt, by Pierre La Garde, another contemporary French artist, is also a striking and effec-

tive, albeit quite simple, treatment of the great theme.

The scene of the finding of Christ in the Temple disputing with the Doctors, while the subject of many decorations, has also inspired a number of splendid easel pieces. To mention a few of the more memorable Disputations, Bernardino Luini, one of the masters of the Milanese school, has two,— one in the Sanctuary Church of Saronno, of which the story runs that, having killed a man in self-defence, he sought an asylum here with the monks, which he obtained on condition that he should cover the walls of the church with scenes from the life of our Lord. The other, evidently painted under less strenuous circumstances, contains a sweet and lovely, though rather too dreamy, head of the youthful Saviour, with heads of four doctors. It is a noteworthy work, and

LUINI. — CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

has found a final resting-place in the National Gallery of London.

There is a lovely, though somewhat expressionless type, suggesting, as Luini's do, a female model, in Boccacino's Christ with the Doctors, in the Royal Academy, Florence.

The Disputation of Pennachi, also in this collection, while a splendid piece of composition and colouring, is wide of the mark as an actual depiction of the probable scene. It is somewhat curious, even considering the period, that such remarkable technical skill should have been wasted on so artificial a rendering of the subject. The picture represents the boy Christ high on a throne, while a group of Church dignitaries, contemporary with the painter, are grouped standing in stereotyped attitudes below Him. Full-length portraiture is evidently the chief intention.

Heinrich Hofmann's well-known pic-

ture is the best liked of the modern Disputations, although the splendid rendering of the scene by Holman Hunt is by far the more important work. The head of the Christ in Hofmann's picture has been for a generation, perhaps, the most generally popular picture of the youthful Saviour.

Of young St. Johns the number is only second to pictures of our Lord in the first period of His life. Raphael has a strenuously beautiful St. John in the Desert, in the Galerie Royale, Florence. Then there is the well-known Young St. John of Andrea Del Sarto, with its

"Strange, prophetic, haunting, fateful eyes,"

as some recent poet has called them. Luini also painted a Virgin and Child with St. John, as part of the fresco in the Church of Santa Maria Degli Angeli; also a Jesus and St. John as infants embracing one another.

GUIDO RENI. — CHRIST AND ST. JOHN.

Guido Reni's Christ and St. John as children is, as might be expected of the painter of the head of Beatrice Cenci, one of the few approaches to a masterpiece of this subject, and one of the most charming works of this rare devotional master.

It is impossible to find any Christ-childs more beautiful than Raphael's. His Madonnas do not seem to slight the infant as so many of the other masters do. In the Virgin and Infant in the National Gallery, in the Madonna del Gran Ducca in the Pitti Palace, in the Madonna of the Candelabra, also in the National Gallery, in each of his Holy Families, and wherever the Child Jesus is introduced, we have, as in all of Raphael's religious work, a type that is beyond all praise, that seems to carry the idea to its farthest embodiment in painting. While the

special expression of the idea of divinity in the face and attitude of the Babe is never strenuously attempted in the handling, it is always felt in the fullest sense through the lines and the colouring. The soul is uplifted and carried away above earthly things on beholding the wonderful type of infant loveliness, both in the National Gallery pictures and in the marvellous Madonna del Gran Ducca at Florence.

Murillo painted the Christ-child several times with wonderful power and sweetness. The example here given is part of his great group of the Holy Family in the National Gallery, London.

Single pictures of the Christ-child are the rarest subjects in religious painting. There are not a dozen notable ones in the whole range of Art. The subject was seldom attempted, for the simple reason that it is an almost impossible

one on account of its more than ideal character.

Munier, of Paris, has recently painted a head which comes as near fulfilling a general ideal as any modern attempt at portraiture of the infant Saviour. This was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1892, and gained much attention. It was promptly reproduced, and is now quite well known in this country.

III.

CHRIST AS TEACHER AND HEALER

"And so the Word had flesh and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought."

— TENNYSON.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST AS TEACHER AND HEALER.

THERE is an interregnum in the life of our Lord, from the day He was found in the Temple among the Doctors, for a long stretch of years up to the period when He begins His ministry.

This period is also an interregnum in sacred art, with one or two very rare exceptions. The treatment of this interim must necessarily be purely imaginative, and there appear to be naïve reasons why it never appealed to the masters of the Renaissance or the Northern schools. These men, working under the direct counsel and often command of the

Church, were content to do the things that were asked of them. There was little motive for finding imaginary scenes wherewith to impress religious faith on the people. And very few of the masters, while they treated classical subjects from the heights of imaginative inspiration, ever attempted to handle the character of our Lord in a like manner. Widely as the treatment of the different schools has varied, the very bone of the sacred text has been adhered to in the selection of subjects.

Holman Hunt, who may be considered the chief exponent of the pre-Raphaelite school, has given us the notable exception in his celebrated work, The Shadow of Death, in which the youthful Saviour is represented as receiving the intimation of Calvary while at work in the shop of his father, the carpenter. Sir John Millais's rather curious picture, a product

of his pre-Raphaelite days, called Christ in the House of His Parents, has been engraved and is more or less widely known in England. Mengelburg, a late German artist, has a picture entitled The Twelve-year-old Christ on His way to Jerusalem, Accompanied by His Parents. The head and face of the youthful Saviour here are reminiscent of Hofmann's Boy Christ in his very well known Disputation.

Of the preaching of John the Baptist, a direct link in our Lord's life, there are a great number of compositions by the masters from the beginning, which cannot, however, be discussed here.

The baptism of our Lord follows in natural sequence in the sacred record. As the beginning of the Saviour's real life work, and the establishment of the rite of baptism, common to every Christian denomination,— no matter how widely differing in creed,— it was and will re-

main of the greatest significance. That part of the Roman Catholic Church which was dedicated to this sacrament was called, from the earliest times, the Baptistery. Here the representations of the scene always formed the key-note of the decorations. Examples still exist as ancient as the Catacombs of Rome, or about the third century of the Christian era.

There is no single instance in which the growth of religious art can be traced to better advantage. From the earliest mosaics, through the Italian and the Northern schools, the Baptism may be studied, yet while nearly all the great painters attempted it, not one of them seems to have produced an acknowledged masterpiece of the subject.

Andrea del Robbia, who did all things well in sculpture, has a fine bas-relief of the scene, which may be seen to-day on the baptismal font of the Church of Santa

VEROCCHIO. — BAPTISM OF CHRIST (DETAIL).

Fiora, in Florence. Perugino, his contemporary, painted the Baptism four times. There are two examples each by Verocchio and Paolo Veronese. Fra Angelico has three examples. The scene occupies one of the panels of the bronze gates of Ghiberti. Raphael's contribution is in the frescoes of the Loggia in the Vatican.

As in all other subjects growing out of the divine narrative, the general acclaim is gradually centred on one or two particular representations. The picture of Cima da Conegliano, painted in 1494 for the Church of San Giovanni in Bragora, in Venice, belongs in this higher class. This comparative masterpiece is often contrasted with that of Giovanni Bellini, which hangs in the Church of San Corona at Vicenza. Thus the two pictures of the Baptism which have most stamped themselves upon successive generations of observers are not works of the great masters nor the

product of the leading school, an anomaly which will often be found in sacred art.

The subject has even occupied the attention of American artists. Mr. F. V. Du Mond, who has rendered several scenes from the life of Christ with force and originality, has a Baptism exhibited some half-dozen years ago, which is a noteworthy effort even among the small number of religious pictures that have been painted within the past decade in America. This is fairly well known through reproduction in periodicals.

Of the Temptation of our Lord, that great event which marks the parting of the ways, His voluntary renunciation of the things of this world, there have been likewise a great range and variety of representations.

As introducing the figure of the Evil One, the subject was found to be of marked difficulty with the early painters. All types

of the devil are found in these first studies, from the primitive imp of the earliest recorded example, which indeed takes us back to the seventh century, to the old man with a Lear-like aspect, whom Ghiberti chose as his model. One of the masterpieces of the Renaissance treatment of the theme is a part of Botticelli's contribution to the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, in which he laboured with Perugino and half a dozen others of the chief painters of the time, who were summoned to Rome by the Pope for the work.

Students of this rare creator of spiritual faces and forms will find this a most interesting example of his craft. The composition is a very naïve and curious one. One looks at first in vain for the actual scene of the tempting, which Ary Scheffer and other modern painters have set forth so boldly. The eye wanders amid groups of interesting figures, with

a confused sense that the wrong title is attached to the work; till finally far up in one corner the Saviour and His tempter are discovered on the "mountain,"—in this case a beetling cliff that still intrudes very little on the actual scene. The observer at once realises that the manner of this piece is the reverse of the usual Temptation. It is "the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them," that Botticelli, with a fit sense of the decorative motive, has chosen, albeit there is a constant subordination to the ecclesiastical in the presentation of the theme. Every part of the picture is a reminder of the Church and her rites. It is full of portraits of ecclesiastics, and the Botticellian type of woman, so well known and so signally admired since the advent of the pre-Raphaelites, figures everywhere. This is the largest, most crowded, and most important fresco, next to his Assumption

painted for the Church of San Pietro Maggiore and now in England, that Botticelli ever set his hand to.

Tintoretto has a Temptation, one of the series of frescoes in the Church of San Rocco at Venice, in which the evil one is represented as "an angel of light," with radiant wings and "an armlet of gleaming jewels." As is to be expected, the figure of the Christ is dominated by this remarkable apparition, and the moral, which, as a matter of fact, none of the Venetian masters seem to have sought too carefully, is not properly exemplified, at least to the Anglo-Saxon sense.

There are very few pictures of the Temptation throughout the whole Renaissance period. Quite untouched in painting among the Northern schools, the only important picture we possess to-day is an engraving from the hand of Lucas Van Leyden.

Among modern works Ary Scheffer's picture is a very satisfactory rendering of the subject to the general observer. Professor Hofmann, who has treated the scene in a series of drawings, follows closely in his footsteps.

Tissot has devoted four aquarelles to the story. As this artist has taken infinite pains to impress the religious moral, I will describe them in detail. Christ is first seen borne through mid-air to the mountain by the shadowy figure of the evil spirit, after the suggestion of the scene given by Milton in his "Paradise Regained." The phantom-like figure of Evil is transformed in the second scene into an ugly old man, before whom our Lord stands looking down with clasped hands in a grotto of rock.

A third transformation of the devil is effected in the next picture, where he is represented in true realistic fashion, as

ARY SCHEFFER. — THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

"a great bat-like creature," with a horrible horned face. The Christ has closed His eyes before the fearful spectre intended to portray the Evil One in full power, and stands with clasped hands, praying.

Tissot's fourth picture represents the victory of the Saviour, who, nevertheless, exhausted by the conflict, lies prone upon the ground, ministered to by angels.

Of the Marriage at Cana, the first of the miracles of our Lord, there is a great picture by Tintoretto in the Church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice, in which the splendour and boldness of this master's imagination find the amplest play. The scene is the interior of a rich and noble hall, in which a splendid company is assembled to partake of the marriage feast. The figures of the Saviour and His mother at the extreme upper end of the board are scarcely distinguishable in the company of the guests and the

wealth of detail, except by the haloes which encircle their heads. The idea that a miracle is transpiring is in no sense apparent here.

Veronese's grand painting with this title hangs in the Louvre, and once seen is not likely to be forgotten. It is a superb wedding-banquet of Venetian nobles. Among the guests are figures of Francis I., and Mary of England, Eleanor of Austria, Charles V., and other great personages of the time. The extreme of realistic splendour in the treatment of a Scriptural subject is realised in this great work.

The Northern artists, in whom, with the exception of the Dutch school, the religious feeling was always the leading motive, give due prominence to our Lord in the scene.

Among the many contributions of Sir Edward Burne-Jones to sacred art is a

VERONESE. — MARRIAGE AT CANA (DETAIL).

window-piece of the Marriage at Cana, at Biarritz, France.

The first recorded act which can be said to belong to Christ's actual ministry is The Cleansing of the Temple. Ghiberti, in those marvellous gates of the Baptistery at Florence, has the scene depicted as following the Temptation, hence plainly referring to the first Cleansing.[1]

The subject is not found represented by the early artists, for the reason that it is a somewhat difficult test as a study of character, a phase of Art which began seriously to develop only with the high Renaissance.

Some of the earlier painters have treated it, however, wholly from the scenic standpoint, the Da Pontes of Bassano, a family of six painters who belong to the Venetian

[1] The second one, it will be remembered, occurs shortly after Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

school, actually going so far as to make it the motive of cattle pieces. Examples of these curious paintings are in the National Gallery of London and the Belvedere, Vienna.

Bonifazio has a grand picture of the subject painted for the vestibule of the Chapel of the Ducal Palace, Venice, which Mrs. Jameson describes with even more than her usual enthusiasm,[1] and concludes by crowning it, with some authority, as the masterpiece of this charming religious painter.

Rembrandt etched the scene with the sincerity and vigour that is characteristic of him. Christ is represented as wielding the scourge with great force — a frightened throng is seen escaping on all sides from this strenuous central figure, and some, in their hurry to get out of the way, have even fallen prostrate. Says a recent

[1] "Sacred and Legendary Art."

writer on sacred art, describing this work: "A single touch redeems the character of a scene which would otherwise seem one of fierce and commonplace anger. It is the mysterious halo which surrounds the Saviour's clasped hands, making His figure the representation of holy and consecrated wrath."

In the discourse with Nicodemus, which follows in the sacred narrative, we find one of those signal changes in the character of our Lord, which make of Him the many-sided and mysterious character that He is. A fine sense of the value of philosophical reflection is presented here in contrast to the scene of vigorous action in the Temple.

The Northern schools, with their native genius for chiaroscuro, the product of long nights and early lamp-lighted evenings, seem to have found most inspiration in this subject. Franz Francken II., a fine

exponent of the best period of the Flemish school, has an example in the Belvedere Gallery at Vienna.

Both Rembrandt and Rubens tried their hand at the scene. The modern Bible illustrators, Bida and Tissot, have endeavoured to do the subject justice, offering as it does unusual opportunities for character study. In the frescoes of John La Farge, in Trinity Church, Boston, Nicodemus is represented as propounding questions to Christ from a scroll, the Saviour looking down upon him in the attitude of a careful listener.

The Discourse with the Samaritan Woman at the Well is the companion piece in the decorations of Trinity, which, taken as a whole, constitute one of the few really notable examples of religious art in the United States.

This episode of the Samaritan woman, which is related only by the Beloved

Disciple, has been painted a great many times. From Filippino Lippi, an example which shows a complete surrender to the influence of his master, Botticelli (the picture is in the Seminaris at Venice), to Burne-Jones, the subject seems to have been common as an easel picture. It was a fine opportunity for the introduction of an ideal portrait of the Saviour, with a completely contrasting type. Burne-Jones's work is employed as the centrepiece of a window in the Church of St. Peters, Vere Street, London.

Professor Hofmann presents the Christ in an attitude of seriousness that is almost commanding as He reproves the woman, whose pagan beauty, in contrast with the clarified mien of the Saviour, suggests at once and powerfully the contrast between the old pagan and the new Christian order of things. "Behold! I make all things

new," is the great moral message of this picture.

Of Wohlgemuth, a very early German painter, who was a part of that period when the religious spirit had, as yet, only

"Taught Art to fold her hands and pray,"

there is preserved to us in a wonderfully fresh condition a picture of Christ calling the Apostles. It is in the Pinakothek at Munich. The landscape is of mediæval Germany, with a river and churches and castles in the background. The Apostles are dispersed about the scene in such uncouth attitudes as were inevitable with the Middle Age Northern painter. But the depth of serious piety in the countenances of all is very fine; and the face and figure of the Saviour may be taken as the very type of the mediæval ascetic.

Lord Lindsay says of the few known examples of this painter in general, that

"the powerful and deeply seated piety of the artist has printed itself on his work."

Ghirlandajo, who was one of the little group of the best painters in Italy summoned by Pope Sixtus to Rome, in the early part of the sixteenth century, for the great task of decorating the Sistine Chapel, was apportioned the calling of Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee, the scene including also the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, as his share of the work.

By the old masters the calling of James and John and the Miraculous Draught of Fishes were often depicted as one and the same scene. This is one of the subjects of which that treasure-store of earliest religious art, the mosaics of San Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, furnishes an example, in the most primitive style, of course.

In the series of Raphael's cartoons,

made for the tapestries of the Sistine Chapel, and now a treasured possession of the South Kensington Museum, there is a Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Only the actual scene of the miracle is treated. It is to my mind a highly decorative piece for a Scriptural scene, — not in any special sense *outré*, however, when considered as the basis for a tapestry — never an important medium for religious work, — in which three large storks in the foreground appear to be introduced chiefly as picturesque accessories. The design is full of the physical meaning of the miracle. The brawny-armed Apostles, drawing in the bursting nets, play the chief part in the general character of the scene.

Rubens has a Miraculous Draught full of life and action, done in his usual heroic style. It is, as is often the case with Rubens, a great picture with very little

religious feeling in it, although the figure of the Christ is depicted with some attention to the ideal attributes of the Saviour.

Gaspard de Craeyer, another Flemish painter, and a contemporary of Rubens, who somewhat shows the master's influence, painted a Miraculous Draught which is among the treasured examples of the early Flemish school in the Museum at Brussels.

There was an important example of the subject painted by Jouvenet at the beginning of the eighteenth century for a new Roman Catholic Church in Paris, which has found its way to the great French National Gallery, and now hangs in the Louvre. The attitude and figure of the Saviour in this work dominate the scene, whereas in the pictures of Raphael and Rubens it is only an impressive part of it.

Among the vast decorative undertakings of Sir Edward Burne-Jones is the

three-light window in the new Ferry Church, at Cheshire, England, in which the three subjects, Christ Preaching from the Ship, The Miraculous Draught, and The Abnegation of Simon Peter, have each a separate space.

Tissot, with his customary fullness in treating the sacred narrative, has a picture of the Preaching from the Ship, one of the least often handled of all the scenes, and he has also depicted the Healing of the Demoniac in the Synagogue, according to both versions, that of St. Mark and St. Luke, though they do not differ substantially.

Of the general healing of the sick there are many passages scattered through the sacred record. Matthew has six scenes of this kind in the first half of his Gospel. This, the most immediate direct evidence of our Lord's divine power, was manifested, more or less, wherever He went,

and there have been many pictures devoted to each one of the miracles.

The theme as a whole was selected by Rembrandt for a remarkable etching, The Hundred Guilders Plate, so called because that was the price the artist asked for the work when with great care and pains he had finished it. It represents the sick in various conditions, coming to Jesus in numbers. The figure of the Saviour is commanding, but the chief interest, as in others of Rembrandt's religious works, consists rather in the careful sincerity with which he has wrought out the varied details of the scene.

Jouvenet, who decorated the Church of St. Martin des Champs in Paris, about the year 1700, and whose work is important enough to have been transferred and preserved in the Louvre, has a picture showing Christ healing the multitude on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret.

This was one of four pictures painted by the artist for this church, all of which have been hung in the French National Gallery.

Overbeck, the leader of the strange band of mystics who endeavoured to dominate modern religious feeling in Germany at the beginning of the present century, has an impressive composition devoted to this grand theme in his Gospel series. It seeks to convey the important idea of the individual and tender ministry of the Divine Healer to each case of suffering, a note that is too much neglected in general pictures of the series.

Zimmerman, following the example of several modern German realists in the treatment of sacred subjects, brings the scene into an every-day modern home of the poor. Representations of such a character, of which examples have multiplied during the latter half of the

HOLMAN HUNT. — THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

nineteenth century, are always very impressive, and seem to have exercised an important influence in later religious feeling. Ary Scheffer's Christus Consolator, a great work of modern sacred painting, belongs to this class.

Hofmann has an impressive picture in this general series, Behold! I Stand at the Door and Knock. This artist gives us the same type of Christ throughout,—benignant, sweet, calm, merciful. It is an ideal that has stirred the heart of modern Germany, particularly among the lower classes, and is indeed one of those representations that have contributed genuinely to religious feeling in our own time.

The Light of the World of Holman Hunt is one of the great religious pictures of all time, possessing a deep and purposeful quality that can only be realised by careful contemplation.

Professor Hofmann, with wonderful versatility, has not only given us scenes from the actual record of the Saviour's life, but, as in his Omnipresence of Christ, has endeavoured objectively to instil religious lessons. This is a fine character study, representing a fifteenth century burgher reading the Bible to his family, with an apparition of the Redeemer appearing in the background and blessing the scene. The invitation to observe and reflect upon the subjective effect of the Divine Presence in each of the contrasting types is instantly felt by the beholder, which is the great service the painter sought to render to religion.

In his Raising of the Daughter of Jairus, Christ is seen in a commanding attitude standing over the bed of the invalid with his right arm raised. To the ultra-modern sense there would seem to be an impression of hypnotic power in

the central figure which awakens the pale maiden to life, and the feeling is emphasised by the astonishment and rapture of her parents at the bedside.

Hofmann's Mary Anointing the Feet of Jesus is, perhaps, the least successful of his great Bible series. There is a quaint sense of something strained in the attitude of all present, that is foreign to his general treatment of character. The beholder is not charmed out of himself into a naïve, religious atmosphere as in the other pictures.

In his Come unto Me, a single figure of the Saviour, looking out at the spectator with outstretched hands, he has produced an ideal of the Christ that is well calculated to satisfy the popular heart of a generation, and has taken its place in the gallery of classical ideals of the Son of Man.

The Visit of the Centurion, of Paolo

Veronese, is in the Madrid Gallery. This is a crowded composition, showing at its best the grand manner of the Venetian school. The Christ has the cultured look of a doctor of philosophy, a product of the schools of the most finished type. A sense of cultivated worldliness dominates His expression, as, with hand uplifted, He bids the Ruler rise. The Ruler is painted after, or more likely directly from, a Venetian noble. The group of the Apostles at the left is likewise studied from contemporaries of the painter. A portrait of a dignitary of the Catholic Church is among them. The Ruler's retinue, including soldiers in armour, black servants, and a magnificent charger, forms a little panorama filling the right half of the picture. This is one of Veronese's great canvases. No less than three other presentations of the subject, attributed to the same master, hang in the galleries of Dresden, Vienna, and Munich.

BAROCCIO. — THE SAVIOUR.

Rubens's Christ and the Magdalen, in the Pinakothek at Munich, is in all essential qualities an unmistakable product of this master hand. None of his women are more finely portrayed than the magnificent Magdalen shown here, while his Christ fulfils that ideal of the Saviour, which is not the ideal simply of a day and generation, in an unexampled degree for this painter. The treatment of the other three male figures introduced in the composition combines to make the picture a masterpiece.

Baroccio's Il Salvatore, an ideal head of the Saviour preserved in the Pitti Gallery, at Florence, is an interesting and somewhat striking example of the early Italian school, and has, no doubt, found a permanent place in the memory of thousands of visitors. The beautifully soft, sustained colouring does much to make it remembered.

In the Jesus Taking Counsel with His Mother, also in the Pitti Gallery, it is noticeable that Veronese has given us exactly the same figure of the Saviour, with but slightly altered expression, while the position of the right hand with which he makes the gesture is identical with that of the Christ in the Healing of the Centurion's Servant. This is not by any means rare among the old masters, who usually changed types a little, but only enough to give some slight sense of variety. None of the works of this, the greatest exponent of the true Venetian school, are of much help as an inspiration to religious sentiment, as it is commonly felt in our own day.

For grandeur of manner, Paolo Veronese is without a peer. He endeavoured to render the double service to art of perpetuating the splendour of The Bride of the Sea and the motive of the divine

legend. The avowed purpose of the Venetian school, however, is never irreligious. In their pride in the splendour of their own time, a splendour which was largely consecrated to the Faith, its great exponents unquestionably had the right to feel the necessity of treating the sacred motive from a contemporary standpoint.

To their own people, the works of Giorgione, of Titian, of Tintoretto, and of Veronese, to name only the leaders of this school, undoubtedly were, and have remained through several centuries, a genuine guide to religious inspiration. Nor is it possible for the stranger to study them seriously in their setting in the churches of Venice to-day without becoming more and more impressed with a sense of their consecrated purpose.

Of The Woman Taken in Adultery, there is a painting by Rocco Marconi in the Corsini Gallery, in Rome, which was

long ascribed to Titian. It is painted with marked seriousness and depth of feeling. The faces of Christ and the adulteress in the scene are subordinate in these important qualities, a blemish, however, which serves further to distinguish them from the group of accusers, two of whom grasp the downcast creature with brawny arms. The variety of expression combining in unity of sentiment in this group of accusers, however, makes this a fine example of the general handling of the lesser examplars of the Venetian school.

Wonderful is the intensity of interest, the sense of the unfolding of a miracle, in the chief figures in Giotto's representation of the Raising of Lazarus. With ascetic realism is the text adhered to. Lazarus "comes forth" literally "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes" and presents in himself the miracle of a man standing erect and yet swathed to the point that

movement is manifestly impossible. Considerations of natural laws, however, are quite lost in the strong dramatic sense that the whole rendering of the scene awakens in the spectator. This is part of the mighty series of frescoes in the Chapel of the Arena at Padua.

Curious are some representations of certain scenes in the life of our Saviour, which have for long hung in the Berlin Gallery under the classification of "Unknown Masters." One of these is a Transfiguration after the general type of Raphael's, in which the painter seems to have exhausted his invention in distributing grotesque attitudes of astonishment, fear, and wonder to the figures grouped about and gazing up at the ascending Saviour. There is a rare mixture of types of individuals, ranging from an old crone to a court dandy. A good deal of correct drawing in this picture, never-

theless, some very fine rendering of costume, and a certain sense of power in the whole composition, have contributed to preserve it for incognito fame.

The Transfiguration is peculiarly sacred in Art because to it was consecrated the greatest work of the greatest painter of all time. The gentle spirit of Raphael suspired in the production of what is before all the most ideal event in the life of our Lord. There is no conception in the realm of Art, no theme that can be imagined by the mortal mind, that is higher. And it is the fitting crown of the half-divine life of Raphael that he died while attempting to portray it.

As to the merits of his Transfiguration (in the Vatican), there has been, and will always continue to be, much discussion. The general sentiment, however, hails it as the world's masterpiece, and till the Christian religion is enrolled with the

RAPHAEL. — TRANSFIGURATION.

creeds of the past it will probably so remain.

> "From harmony; from heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began,
> The diapason ending full in man."

Thus sings Dryden; and there is an ineffable sense of harmony in the genius of Raphael that lifts him nearest of all painters to the divine essence. Despite the incongruity of the groupings, despite the cavillings at the attitudes of the prophets, and the stigmatisation of Taine, who declares that the poise of the Christ is that of a swimmer "striking out," the work possesses a quality above and beyond all praise or criticism. It is to the glory of Art and the pride of Christendom that the colouring remains, for the most part, almost as fresh to-day as when it was painted, nearly four hundred years ago.

Other masterpieces have faded, but the Transfiguration glows as though it had been given the dying painter to endow his last work with immortal youth. As sacred art is the crown of all art, so this is the crown of all sacred art. It is the Mecca of the traveller from every bourne of Christendom, and he draws near after long journeyings to its resting-place in the Vatican, with a feeling little less than an actual realisation of the Sacred Presence.

The writer does not attempt to record here personal impressions, although he well remembers his own visit to the picture. It is the verdict of Christendom and of Art, despite all great authorities to the contrary, that I have here set down.

In the earliest art there are no Transfigurations. The subject was quite too ideal for the spirit of the Gothic and

Byzantine periods. It is indeed utterly ideal in every aspect, ideal though every scene in the life of our Lord must be. The monks drew it occasionally in the missals, but the first great painter, Giotto, wisely held his hand from it. Ghiberti, who seems to have attempted all things in his bronze gates, has a scene. Fra Angelico, that man of God, could not be restrained from setting his hand to it, but the intention outruns the performance.

The Renaissance painters generally did not attempt the theme. The gorgeous imagination of the Venetian school, however, was naturally tempted, and there are examples from the hand of Lorenzo Lotto, very unideal in expression, in the Municipio at Recanti; of Bellini, in the Correr Museum at Venice; and of Pennachi, now in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice.

Titian restrained his hand till old age

had brought him near the period of his own apotheosis, and at eighty-nine, he painted the Transfiguration. It was a task of ardour to this great soul, — perhaps of necessity, — rather than of accomplishment, however. Tintoretto painted it (Church of S. Afria, Brescia), and Perugino, and though here is a short roll of great masters, it is a notable fact that none of their works challenge for an instant the general fame of Raphael's masterpiece.

Ford Madox Brown is the only relatively important modern name which is connected with this subject, his work being a memorial window in a church in England.

The theme appears to be above the inspiration of latter-day imagination, as indeed it has remained for several centuries. The subject of the Woman Taken in Adultery seems, on the other hand, to have been especially prolific of represen-

tation. I will not attempt to trace the moral causes which point the fact, but simply content myself by quoting the general remark of a very recent authority, that "no subject from Christ's life, originating in this period, is at all comparable with those of longer standing as an exponent of sacred sentiment."[1]

It is unquestionably characteristic that the most important examples are the productions of the Venetian school. Lorenzo Lotto painted the scene twice, and in extenso, his compositions containing no less than seventeen figures. The paintings are in Loreto and the Louvre, Paris. The subject is attributed to Titian, but none of the works are absolutely authentic, which is perhaps to be wondered at. Tintoretto's robust imagination and strong hand seem to have revelled in it, and there are three brilliant examples, — one

[1] Estelle M. Hurll, "The Life of Our Lord in Art.

each in the Venice Academy, in the Dresden Galleries, and in the Archbishop's Palace at Milan.

The art of Northern Europe of the cotemporary period furnishes several examples, chief of which are those by Franz Francken II., in the Dresden Gallery, and two by the great realist, Cranach, one in the Dresden collection, and the other in the Munich Gallery. Rubens and Rembrandt found a natural enough inspiration in the subject. The work of the former is in the collection at Leigh Court, England, while that of Rembrandt is in the National Gallery, London.

Poussin, the most important early influence in French art, — indeed the founder of the academic tradition, — painted an important picture which is now in the Louvre, Paris, as are most of the great works of this painter.

Modern painters have been attracted by

TITIAN. — HEAD OF CHRIST.
(From Christ and the Adulteress.)

the æsthetic quality of the scene, the most important renderings being by Siemiradzki, by Otto Wolff, and by Domenico Morelli, and it is also included in the Bible Series of Bida, and our latest important religious master, Tissot.

Hofmann's treatment of the Adulteress scene is impressive. The woman on the ground in an attitude of submission, and yet with a certain disdain of her accusers in her face, is at once seen to be beautiful. The accusers are a dignified lot of old men, and not the semi-rabble that Titian portrays. The figure of the Saviour is grand in its sense of appeal as it points to the poor creature prostrate at his feet. The idea of an informal tribunal whose only intention is calm justice is the keynote of the whole composition.

The Raising of Lazarus, as might be expected from the dramatic value of the legend, has been a favourite subject with

painters of all periods. I have already referred to Giotto's picture. Here again it is the roll-call of the great names in Art that must be answered to. To mention a scant few of the most notable efforts, that of Rembrandt occurs at once. A painting of the subject by him is now in the collection of Mr. Charles M. Yerkes, of New York; but the much better known work is the etching which bears the date of 1633. The greatest genius in chiaroscuro whom the world has produced found his best opportunity among sacred subjects in the contrasting lights and shadows of this sepulchral theme. Unforgetable to all who have seen even a respectable reproduction of the engraving, is the remarkable quality of the work in this genre. The blackness of the sursoundings, the figure of Lazarus revived, — alive, — rising out of the great light reflected from the divine figure of the

Saviour! The composition is entirely sane, yet mystic and miraculous to a degree unapproached by other delineators of the scene.

Benjamin West, the first American genius in painting, made a picture not long after his departure to England as an altar-piece for the Manchester Cathedral. Henry O. Tanner, an American painter, has given us a striking modern realistic presentation of the subject, — a picture which has recently been bought by the French government and is now in the Luxembourg.

Elihu Vedder, the most important symbolic painter that America has produced, has done a remarkable single head of Lazarus, owned by Melville E. Stone, of Chicago.

As Canon Farrar succinctly remarks,[1] "pictures from the parables do not prop-

[1] "The Life of Christ in Art." London, 1894.

erly belong to the life of Christ." There are, nevertheless, examples as early as the mosaics of San Apollinare Nuovo (Ravenna). Of the tale of the Prodigal Son there are pictures from the earliest to the latest times. The Good Samaritan has been often treated, and the moral of the Wise and Foolish Virgins has been rendered on canvas to the enlightenment and instruction of all generations. A very well known picture of the latter legend is that by Piloty, the father of the modern Munich school, which has recently been exhibited in this country.

Our own William M. Hunt has a grand picture of the Return of the Prodigal in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Dubufe's painting in three panels is perhaps as well known, through constant reproduction during the past twenty years, as any picture ever drawn from the sacred legend.

The Feast of Dives, as a rendering of

the story of Dives and Lazarus, offered unexampled opportunities for the splendour of style that was the hall-mark of the Venetian school. Teniers, whose picture readily occurs in this connection, has a fantastic and peculiar example which is in the National Gallery, London. This important early Dutch master, of whom it has been remarked that nothing in the life of his own country escaped him, seems, nevertheless, to have cared for certain religious subjects, although the general student of his work would be at a considerable loss to trace his direct inspiration.

When we consider the moral importance of the Sermon on the Mount, and the estimation in which this discourse of our Lord's is held in modern times, it is somewhat disappointing to record its very scant treatment in religious painting. There are only one or two early examples

and these of but little moment. A single, well-known picture of the subject of the seventeenth century is a large canvas by Claude Lorraine, now in the Grosvenor Gallery, London. Bida alone, of all the nineteenth century Bible illustrators, included the scene in his series. Von Uhde's picture is the only strictly modern representation, and it is sincere and impressive to the degree of power, as are all the religious works of this master. It seems to be, indeed, the only existing work of genuine importance devoted to the theme.

There is no scene in the life of our Lord that is dearer to all humanity than that one contained in the touching account of Mark, beginning, "And they brought young children to him that he should touch them." It was the Teutonic races, with their strong sentiment for the home, who seemed first to have

MURILLO. — SERMON ON THE MOUNT, OR MIRACLF OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES (DETAIL).

recognised the beauty of the theme. The Italian schools, indeed, do not furnish a single noteworthy example. The Gospel Book of Munich, one of the early missals, furnishes the first known example. The first important paintings are by Lucas Cranach (the elder). There are two, one in the Northbrook collection in England, and another in the Stadtkirche, at Naumburg, bearing the early date of 1529. Cranach had these pictures copied again in his own studio, as is evidenced by the fact that an authentic copy exists to-day in the Dresden Gallery.

A certain Vincenz Sillaer, a contemporary of Cranach, is known to fame only through his picture of Christ Blessing Little Children. It hangs in the Munich Gallery, and the legend attached to it in the catalogue is that it is the only existing work of the artist.

Adam Van Noort, the first master of

Rubens, has a picture which is preserved in the Museum at Brussels, and there is a painting in the National Gallery, London, of which the original ascription to Rembrandt has of late years become quite legendary.

With the growth of European civilisation, the love and care of children has become a matter of increasing solicitude, and the subject has grown correspondingly popular. The school of Overbeck devoted some attention to it early in the century. It will be readily recalled among the works of Benjamin West, a picture full of human feeling, but lacking in obvious points of composition.

Sir Charles Eastlake's painting of the subject is well known. A recent authority says of its origin: "The painting was received by contemporary critics (1839) with an enthusiasm amounting to a perfect furore. The artist was freely likened

to the greatest masters of the Italian Renaissance, and no praise was thought too high for his work. If the calmer judgment of later criticism has modified this extravagant estimate, it is still true that the picture is one of the best of the subject ever painted." [1]

Fritz Von Uhde has handled the subject in that extreme realistic style in which he endeavours to render the sacred message. His work is always subjective to the last degree in that not the least of the symbols of the faith are introduced. He is the very antithesis of Giotto and the first religious painters. In the Christ Blessing Little Children, a stranger, a man of the lower middle classes attired in the every-day garb of German civilisation, has entered a schoolroom, and seated himself in the midst of the children, who are being gradually won over by his

[1] Estelle M. Hurll, "The Life of Our Lord in Art."

presence and manner. It is as ample a treatment as the theme can well receive, while at the same time the simplest one possible.

Such work as this of Von Uhde and other modern masters seeks to blend religion with human sentiment so as to reach the ideal of which Christ spoke when he said, "I and the Father are one." Art can have no higher mission, and we have reached the summit of religious painting when, through the simple expression of common, every-day human emotion, we conceive the divine essence, — that apotheosis which lifts the soul into dumb and joyous assent with all good things.

IV.

CHRIST AS MARTYR

"That Sacrifice! The death of Him,
The High, and ever Holy One!"

— WHITTIER.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST AS MARTYR.

THE first representations of the Passion of our Lord date from the seventh century, and were born of an edict of the Church. The Council of Constantinople which sat in 692 decided, after due deliberation, that the subject should be treated thereafter as part of religious art. Heretofore, only mild and chiefly symbolic ideas had been chosen in the delineation of the divine narrative.

Canon Farrar [1] devotes a whole chapter to the consideration of this early reserve in painting Christ, and in a shorter

[1] "The Life of Christ in Art."

one sums up the reasons therefore. He remarks: "Since Christians saw idols on all sides of them, and since those idols were often surrounded with seductiveness, and sometimes displayed with unblushing cynicism the fury of perverted appetites, they would naturally shrink with something like abhorrence from anything which might be confused with a material object of worship."

The early sentiment of religious art was the literal injunction of the Second Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me!" In the year 340, one of the chief bishops of the Church commands: "Paint not Christ! But carry about with you upon your soul in thought the bodiless Word."

The infinitely wider scope which this decree of the Council afforded to religious art seems, if we may judge from the license which followed, to have been a

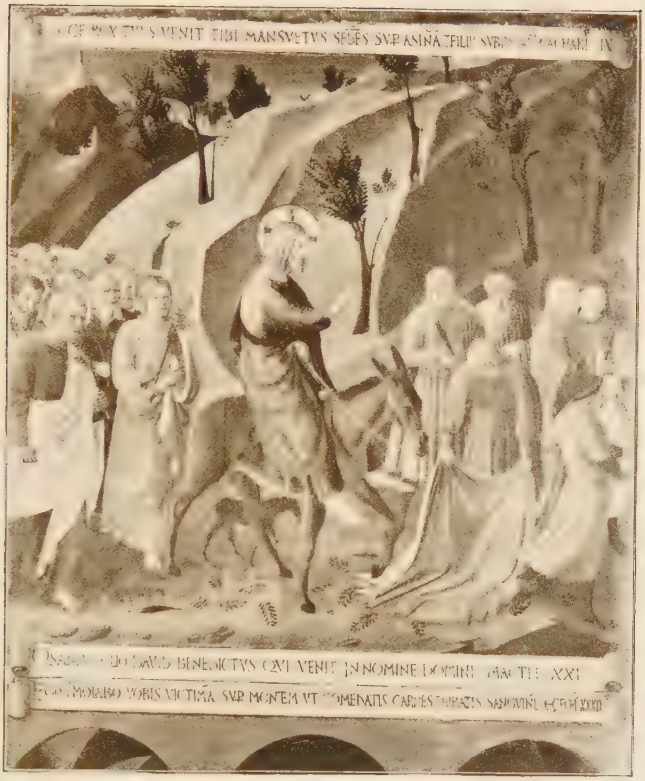
GIORGIONE. — CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS

somewhat unwise divergence. It needed only the edict of the Church to stir to its depths the semi-barbaric imagination of the Dark Ages in delineations of the awful scenes which follow our Lord's entrance upon His martyrdom. And from this beginning it has followed ever since that more attention has been paid to the Crucifixion and attendant scenes. The early masters, Giotto and the rest, who devoted years to a whole series, made the Crucifixion the crown of their work. Other series were devoted exclusively to the subject. A considerable part of the splendour of the Church of St. Mark at Venice is derived from the mosaics of the central dome, representing this sad period. One of the greatest triumphs of early religious art is the series of twenty-six frescoes by Duccio, which occupied two years of the painter's life, 1308–10, and adorn the cathedral at Sienna. The

great easel pictures of subjects growing out of the closing days of the life of our Lord will be mentioned in their order.

The entry into Jerusalem marks the beginning of the Passion Scenes and the commencement of the last week of the life of the Christ on earth. I have seen a striking picture by Alex Bida in his Bible series. Riding on an ass, followed by the disciples, and preceded by men and women with palms, while a multitude lines the way and a great crowd, in the forefront of whom appear the dignitaries of the city, await to give him welcome, the Saviour approaches the towering and splendid gate of the city. The scene is full of the life, colour, and movement of a triumphal event, the last hour of triumph in the bitter life of the Christ!

In early art this scene has a long history, traceable on the sarcophagi, in the early mosaics, and in the grand series of


VENIT TIBI MANSVETVS SEDES SVP ASINAM FILII SVB
BENEDICTVS QVI VENIT IN NOMINE DOMINI MATTH XXI
OFFERAM VOBIS VICTIMAM SVP MONTEM VT

FRA ANGELICO. — ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

early Italian painters, where it is found again and again repeated. The single exception to its general use in the churches, was as an altar-piece.

Dürer has a fine composition in his celebrated Little Passion series, so called because the thirty-seven sketches composing it were smaller than those in his first series of the Passion completed five years earlier (1511), and called the Greater Passion. This genius was in a certain sense the Hogarth of the Middle Ages, with a more than even Hogarthian passion for telling the truth as he saw it. While the purpose and the power of his religious pictures can never be mistaken, he was yet curiously fond of introducing purely contemporary details. Even in so serious a subject as the Flagellation, for instance, he has a long-haired poodle shaved after the fashion of a "lion" in the foreground. An urchin with a mischievous face blows

a horn contemptuously at the suffering Saviour from one corner.

Despite the multiplicity of such incongruities, the value of Dürer's work will always be great and immediate; and there is certainly no painter who so rivets the imagination by the curious sense the beholder conceives at the first glance that the last detail of the scene will be found on the canvas. Dürer leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination.

As a representative of early Middle Age life and manners in the Northland, he is of considerably more value even than as a religious painter. The very soul of German Mediævalism indeed exists in his pictures, — all its barbarity, its cruelty, its grossness, its asceticism, its splendour. There are certain details of Middle Age costume, of custom, which live nowhere except in the vast collection of his works.

All of the modern Bible illustrators —

Overbeck, Bida, Doré, Hofmann, Tissot — have interesting pictures of the Entry into Jerusalem. Overbeck, with native realism, introduces prominently among the spectators figures of himself and his immediate relations. Well known to the general masses of civilisation is Doré's comparatively recent treatment of this subject. It is full of the exalted spirit of the scene, and Doré makes much of the figure of the Saviour in this sense.

Christ Weeping over Jerusalem, which immediately follows the Entry, is one of Ary Scheffer's three greatest works, the Temptation and the Consolator being the others. This is a scene calling for strong dramatic imagination. Distinctly too fanciful to be an attractive subject to the early or Renaissance painters, it remained for the refined genius of the nineteenth century to introduce it. Ary Scheffer's picture is the first important

one. Sir Charles Eastlake's clarified spirit has given us a beautiful rendering, which now hangs in the National Gallery, London.

The three years' ministry of the Saviour drew to a close with these last days in Jerusalem. The chief sects were stirred up against Him, and as He went about the city with His disciples they sought to "entangle Him in His talk," as a prelude to lodging a serious charge against Him. It was under these circumstances that they endeavoured to entrap Him into treason by asking Him about the tribute paid to Cæsar.

The scene, while never included definitely among the Passion Series, is, nevertheless, a general subject in Art. Masaccio's well-known picture, the Tribute Money, is of great value as being one of the very first examples of an intelligent portrayal of human character in a sacred

TITIAN. — TRIBUTE MONEY (DETAIL).

scene. As rendered by Titian (Dresden Gallery) it is claimed by many to be his masterpiece. There are but three figures in the piece, which is really a study of the Christ at a supreme moment of wisdom and power. It is no small thing to consider this picture as Titian's greatest work, in view of the fact that he is adjudged by a certain important class of critics to be the greatest painter who ever lived.

All three of the great masters of Northern Europe in the sixteenth century painted the Tribute Money. Van Dyck's picture, like Titian's, concentrates on the two strongly contrasting figures, the patient, gentle, powerful Christ, and the cunning Pharisee. As we, who read the scene in the Gospel of John to-day, might naturally expect, Rubens and Rembrandt both give it a more ample setting. There is a group of spectators who are properly chagrined

and surprised at being foiled by the adroit answer of Jesus.

These were perilous times indeed for the Son of Man, and the last few days in Jerusalem are aptly summed up in Renan's remark,[1] "Each moment at this period becomes awful, and has counted more than whole centuries in the history of humanity." The history of Art fully bears out this pregnant statement.

No scene of all the Saviour's life has been painted with more care and deeper religious feeling than The Last Supper. Here again a very imposing array of critics, backed by a vast number of observers for fully four centuries, arises and proclaims the achievement of Da Vinci to be the masterpiece of all time. Unfortunately, time has outrun the verdict, and the wonderful fresco on the wall of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan,

[1] "The Life of Jesus."

is sadly decayed. But it still needs no restoration to hint at its profound power and purpose, its exalted beauty, and divine feeling. In fact, it was, as originally painted, so great a picture that restoration is in the highest sense hopeless, although it is chiefly familiar to moderns through one or another of the restored copies.

It is related that Da Vinci occupied nearly a year at this work. He was boarded and lodged at the expense of the convent while thus engaged, and it is told by Vasari that he used to spend hours before it, absorbed in profound study. Being finally taken to task by the prior of the convent for this seeming waste of time and the convent's substance, he responded that he was really putting in his chief strokes while he appeared to sit in idleness. The reply was so apt and striking that he was thereafter left to himself.

Leonardo Da Vinci was not so much a

great painter as a great man. His aim in life seemed to be to perfect himself in every possible branch of knowledge. His vast and cultured intelligence is revealed in the head of Christ in The Last Supper, as the best expression of his own remarkable genius that he could possibly put upon canvas. The general arrangement of the whole picture has always been held to be admirable. It was considered a masterpiece of conception in its time, and no more intellectual rendering of the scene has been given us since it was painted, although in the general summary, we have to consider so antipodal a composition as Von Uhde's well-known piece, to take a prominent example of a modern class.

Beginning with the sixth century mosaics of San Apollinare Nuovo, at Ravenna, there are representations of the Lord's Supper down to yesterday. The

RAPHAEL (ATTRIBUTED). — HEAD OF CHRIST.
(From The Last Supper.)

great art series of the early and pre-Renaissance periods included it. It was a favourite theme wherewith to adorn the refectories or dining-rooms of the convents and priories. Here the monks who were painters wrought with ardour on so appropriate a scene. The deeper religious feeling of Central and Southern Italy produced more examples of this class than the North can show.

The basic character of the composition — a dozen men of the plainest degree gathered about a table — is of the simplest. There seems to have been no distinct temptation here to the splendid manner of the Venetian school, and though there are fine pictures attributed to Tintoretto, all are a distinct degradation of the scene, and in no sense noteworthy among his works. Titian and Paolo Veronese are mentioned in connection with the Last Supper, but their work is not memorable.

When Holbein lived at Basle, in his early manhood, he painted a Last Supper, part of which is missing. The picture hangs in the Basle Gallery. Dürer gives us the sturdy German type for his disciples, who seem to take some natural interest in the eating and drinking. And that is also the way Lucas Van Leyden painted it. "No religion without an honest physical basis" was the motto of the early German masters. That is the motive of Dürer, who always renders the extreme of expression. Rembrandt indeed never thought of conveying a spiritual idea, until after he had paid strict attention to the physical one. It is an honest basis for Art, and has given us a number of enduring examples, among them Rembrandt's own picture of the Last Supper.

Da Vinci's treatment has been the keynote of all attempts to picture the Last Supper since the finer sense of the later

nineteenth century, with the Gallic spirit in the lead, has generalised the soul of Art into a single idea, — technique. There is no surer testimony to the feeling that Da Vinci was indeed a soul like Shakespeare, "Not for an age, but for all time."

The picture of Fritz Von Uhde, a living German painter, is one of the best known among modern examples. A recent critic has remarked with fine insight that "Von Uhde's simple pathos revives under modern forms the spirit of Rembrandt." Von Gebhardt, another living German artist, has also contributed an impressive Last Supper to the modern realistic treatment of the subject.

As to the scene which is a part of the Supper, the Washing of the Disciples' Feet, as epitomising and it may be said apotheosising our Lord's humility, — the keystone of the Christian creed, — we

have it from the early sarcophagi down to the present day. The roll-call is one of important names. One loves to linger on them.

All the fragrance of the earliest, the simplest, undoubtedly the most genuine, period of religious art clusters around the memory of Giotto, of Duccio, of Ghiberti, of Fra Angelico. No finer example for the truly religious spirit is offered than here. Giotto has it in the series to which he devoted his best years, — the Arena Chapel at Padua. It is in the bright chaplet of Duccio's fame, — the immortal Christ series of the Cathedral of Sienna. It is a panel of the marvellous gates of Ghiberti. The gentle spirit of Fra Angelico first instituted the idea of humility in the disciples in the scene. Peter shrinks away with a deprecating gesture, drawing his feet under him. There is a spirit of reverence in

all the early examples which it is good to behold.

A picture by Morando, in the Verona Gallery, that was formerly attributed to his master, Moroni, renders the scene best of all the earlier pictures. All mawkishness in the idea is pretermitted utterly in this portrayal, the sense of which is the true key-note of the theme, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," — at once utter subjection to, and complete triumph over, all things earthly!

Tintoretto, who lived a long life of tremendous energy and great accomplishment as a painter, insomuch that he was nicknamed "The Robust," and who was more faithful than other masters of the Venetian school in that he rendered nearly, if not quite, every scene from our Lord's life, has an example which is preserved in the Na-

tional Gallery of London. Lucas Cranach, one of the early German realists, and a most precious and important painter, has a good picture now in the Royal Gallery at Berlin.

Franz Francken II., the most conspicuous name in the family of Fame of all the Franckens, which included no less than eleven painters and engravers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has a double composition in the Berlin Gallery, of the Lord's Supper and the Washing of Peter's Feet, the latter taking place in the foreground. This is, to my mind, the most exact treatment of the subject if the Scriptural record is followed. Ford Madox Brown, the most notable modern painter of the scene, follows this general idea, although the disciples, most of whom are behind the table, are so far in the background that they seem to be ridiculously subordinate to the scene, mere shadowy

figures with no direct meaning or expression, while the attention is all concentrated on the burly yet beautiful figure of Peter and the seriously impressive Christ in the foreground. The original was bought by some admirer of the pre-Raphaelite school and presented to the National Gallery, London, in 1893.

As representing the Saviour's Last Discourse to His Disciples, the beautiful words recorded only by John, we have a picture by Bonifazio II. that cannot be slighted in any category of sacred art. It is a deeply impressive religious composition, handled in an alluring and distinctive manner. In the face of the Christ there is seen an expression of divinity that is finely contrasted with the half-divinity that constant intercourse with Him had given to the mien of His disciples. Philip is entirely earnest in his plea, "Lord, show us the Father,"

while the Christ seems utterly divorced from earthly considerations as He yet answers in *propria persona*. It is something like a second Transfiguration that Bonifazio, one of the lesser masters of the Venetian school, exhibits to the careful student in this picture. The work hangs in the Venice Academy.

The true Agony, to the general reader, begins with the night in Gethsemane. Here Jesus was wont to repair from Jerusalem during those last stormy days for an evening of peace and quiet. Every day the burden of life grew greater. Fresh proofs that the Pharisees and the Sadducees only sought to bring Him under the dominion of the stern Roman government, hourly increased. So he consecrates a night in lonely Gethsemane to a special prayer for help and deliverance.

The scene necessarily calls for imaginative treatment of the finest quality. Ex-

amples, indeed, are found ranging from the Gospel Book of Munich (eleventh century) down to the latest painters; but there are few pictures of this particular event which will hold the modern sense, except the modern ones. Hofmann's, the lone figure of the Saviour kneeling against a rock, will sufficiently satisfy a popular ideal. A more intense attitude and expression is that rendered by Liska, the picture having been painted at Rome in 1880. In both of these, as also in the picture by Bruni in the Hermitage Gallery in St. Petersburg, the double sense of present agony and spiritual triumph is intimately conveyed.

The scene of the Betrayal in the Garden, of which the chief motive in artistic representation has always been the Kiss of Judas, is found even in the very beginnings of Art history. It occurs in the mosaics of San Apollinare, at

Ravenna, and in the panels of the early Cologne school, now preserved in the Berlin Gallery. Giotto and Duccio, of the first Italian schools, painted it, and Ghiberti devotes thereto a panel of his Bronze Gates of the Baptistery at Florence.

Giotto (in the Arena Chapel, Padua) depicts Judas as a brutal rascal, in whom crass stupidity is more evident than cunning or even hatred. This is by no means the modern conception of the character, although the picture is interesting.

Duccio, in his great series of the Opera del Duomo, in Sienna, with a more enlightened sense gives us the type of Judas that the popular mind has usually conceived, — a man of deep craft and cunning, the ideal traitor.

Fra Angelico, who never apparently allowed the thought of evil to enter his

soul, — you will search in vain through his works for a single inharmonious note in the general accord of goodness in the expressions and actions of his personages, — avoids the evident difficulty by presenting a rear view of the figure of Judas. This is also the attitude in Ghiberti's panel.

Dürer divided the subject into two scenes. We have the Kiss of Judas in his Little Passion series, and Christ Taken Captive, being led away by the soldiers, in the Greater Passion. Lucas Van Leyden presents a vigorous scene in his realistic manner, which shows us the Capture and the Kiss as taking place simultaneously.

Schongauer, who was half a century before Dürer, and painted and engraved with even more painful realism, makes an important contribution in his characteristic manner to the series. Van Dyck was

attracted to the subject, as indeed he was, generally speaking, to the closing scenes rather than the earlier ones in the life of our Lord, and his picture hangs to-day in the Gallery of the Prado, at Madrid. He has idealised the Saviour utterly in this work, representing Him with radiant face, an apotheosis of divine triumph at the very close turning-point of His earthly career.

Hofmann, of recent masters, has a painting outside of his Bible series which hangs in the Darmstadt Museum. Ary Scheffer, after the manner of his Christ and the Devil, in his great picture of the Temptation, painted a picture, showing only Christ and Judas, that is a proper concession to the modern spirit of subjectivity. It is a study of the characters of the two men, and a successful rendition, like his Temptation, of the meaning of the supreme moment.

A rather fine picture of the Kiss of Judas in the same general style has been exhibited only recently by C. Aug. Guger, a German artist.

Owing to the conditions of Roman rule at Jerusalem, the circumstance that the ruling race had very little in common with the Jews, either in religion or morals, there was some difficulty in securing the conviction of Jesus. Five times was He held for examination, once before Annas and Caiaphas, once before Herod, and twice before the direct representative of Cæsar, Pontius Pilate. These are important scenes to the painter, the great figure of the chief actor, of the ruler, and the accessories of spectators in varied groups and costumings, affording excellent pictorial opportunity.

Of the first hearing before Annas, recorded by John, Dürer has a picture in his Little Passion series. As was often

the case with this very earnest man, in order to be wholly impressive, he here finds it necessary to degenerate into positive brutality. Annas is represented as seated on a canopied throne in the background, while the accused is dragged up a stairway in the foreground by two ferocious soldiers in mediævial costume.

That there may be no doubt which of the hearings is represented, Lucas Van Leyden in his picture engraves the name of Annas on his throne, in the same manner that the newspaper cartoonist of to-day labels his characters.

The chief value of these early Northern masters as a help to religious inspiration is the deep sincerity — sometimes we can almost imagine it to be prayerful — with which they worked out their strange scenes. Canon Farrar observes, in this connection, with wise insight,[1] "In Art,

[1] "The Life of Christ in Art."

insincerity and unreality become certain of detection when they try to pass themselves off as religion."

The first really important hearing, seeing that Annas was a man of influence and not of authority, was that before Caiaphas, his son-in-law, and the high priest of the Jews. St. Matthew gives the scene in fullest detail, and it is of most importance in religious painting, next to the hearing before Pilate, which has been rendered oftenest of all.

The tribunal of Caiaphas is found even on the remains of early Christian sarcophagi away back in the fifth and sixth centuries. Giotto and all the early Italian and Northern masters have examples. Holbein, to mention an infrequent painter of sacred subjects, produced a drawing during his earlier years at Basle, and it is preserved in the museum there to-day,

where are hung the most important of his few religious works.

The Mocking of Christ, immediately following the Examination before Caiaphas, also affords ready opportunity to all the early religious painters. Domenico Morelli, a very talented contemporary artist, is one of the few moderns who has been attracted by the spirit of the scene.

Only the short roll of painters who, with fervent zeal, depicted about everything that could be presented in the life of Christ, give the scene of the first appearance before Pilate, and the same may be remarked of the hearing before Herod. Albert Dürer's is, perhaps, the best known and the most valuable representation of the latter. This is a part of the Little Passion series.

The last appearance before Pilate, the culmination of the Trial scenes, the hour of final judgment, has, as stated, been

CORREGGIO (ATTRIBUTED). — NAPKIN OF ST. VERONICA.

painted oftenest of all. It has been popular from the earliest times, while the latest contribution to the subject, the masterly rendering of Munkacsy, is a work of only yesterday. This picture, which was publicly exhibited first in Europe and then in this country only a few years ago, was finally added to the treasures of American art through the liberality of Mr. John Wanamaker, of Philadelphia.

The Venetian school here comes into notice through the important picture of Tintoretto, which is a part of his series of frescoes in the Church of San Rocco, at Venice. Pilate, a venerable man with a long beard, undoubtedly a portrait of some Venetian noble, is seated in state amid a scene of architectural grandeur. Before him, having just ascended a flight of steps leading to the throne of the ruler, appears the Christ, clad in a long white robe, which, with the glowing halo encir-

cling His head, throws a striking contrast upon the scene. The background is crowded with an assemblage of handsome, dignified, and yet sufficiently interested men and women. Pilate laves his hands rather ostentatiously from a splendid service of plate, as he turns his head with a bland aspect toward the humbled Saviour. The moment chosen is the final expression of his good-will to the Christ, as recorded by Matthew: "He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it.'"

The Flagellation of Christ, which immediately followed, is regarded by Renan[1] as a mere excuse on the part of Pilate, with the hope of satisfying the mob. At the same time he remarks that this punishment usually preceded a crucifixion. The scene was seized on by the early religious

[1] "The Life of Jesus."

painters, and, especially by the Northern masters, is rendered with something more than necessary fidelity. The Italian painters likewise often take pains to suggest extreme cruelty. Pilate is usually a part of the picture, seated in appropriate state, and thus a strong point of contrast is effected. The opportunity to present the rabid fever of the spirit that hurried the Saviour to his doom was plainly seen by all early painters, and so fully taken advantage of that pictures of the Flagellation, down to the end of the sixteenth century, are nowise pleasant to look upon.

Immediately following this period there is at least one great portrayal of the theme by Velasquez, but it is great only as a work of art, and so entirely admirable in this sense that it quite banishes religious feeling. This important example of Spain's greatest painter is called Christ at the

Column, and is now in the National Gallery, London.

The Crowning with Thorns is the subject of two great conceptions by Titian done in a somewhat cruel spirit but nevertheless grand works as to general treatment. One of these hangs in the Louvre, Paris, and the other is in the Munich Gallery. Of the former, the tradition runs that it was painted at the age of ninety.

Having scourged Jesus, Pilate brought Him forth to the people maimed and bleeding, in the hope, as seems plausible enough from his whole attitude throughout the trial, that the mob might call for a suspension of final judgment. It is a great moment for the painter. But only in modern art do we find representations of the Ecce Homo that at all satisfy the modern sense of the scene. So great a master as Titian painted Christ

lying on the ground, exhausted with suffering, with Pilate standing over Him as he pronounces the words of extenuation. The picture is in the Prado Gallery, Madrid.

All the early painters accentuated this idea of physical suffering in the chief figure, at the expense of the greater motive which modern artists have conceived for the scene. That of Ciseri, for instance, an Italian of our own day, who has painted religious themes with considerable power, represents the Christ as looking down upon the mob, subdued by suffering, but calm in the strength of spiritual triumph.

To return to earlier times, Rembrandt, who has engraved some religious subjects with unforgetable power, has an etching of this one made in 1636. The leading motif in this work is also the spiritual victory of Christ at the moment of His degradation.

Benjamin West, who gave to his delineation of the scene the title Christ Rejected, is conceded to have produced his best picture in the effort. The painting is in our own country, at the Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Munkacsy, whose Christ before Pilate is so well known among us, pays particular attention to the excited populace in his picture.

Correggio's Ecce Homo hangs in the National Gallery, London. The easel picture of Guido Reni, representing the despairing head of the Saviour crowned with thorns is one of the best known and most popular of all religious works of art. The knowledge that he is said to have painted a large number of duplicates will perhaps detract somewhat from this general estimate. Murillo also rendered the subject in much the same style.

GUIDO RENI. — ECCE HOMO.

The journey to Calvary is known in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, which is largely the history of sacred art, as the Stations of the Cross. The idea originated in the mind of a wealthy burgher of Nuremberg, one Martin Kotzel, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1477. Tradition had long preserved a certain path over the hills as the Via Dolorosa, — the road which Jesus took on His way to crucifixion. Piecing the narratives together for his purpose, on his return home Kotzel employed Adam Kraft, a friend of Dürer, to paint seven scenes, culminating in a Crucifixion, at regular stations on the way between his own house and the Church of St. John, where he was a regular worshipper. The scenes in order were: 1. Christ Bearing the Cross. 2. He Falls. 3. He meets the Virgin. 4. He Falls Again. 5. St. Veronica Lends Him Her Handkerchief.

6. He Falls a Third Time. 7. The Entombment.

The subject in a general sense is a repulsive one and has been employed wholly as a religious emblem. There is scarcely a Catholic church of any pretensions that has not its series. The tradition of St. Veronica's napkin was indeed painted earlier than the above mentioned series, and there is an example recorded as the work of Meister Wilhelm of Cologne, about the year 1380. Of this napkin of St. Veronica, who, according to the legend, offered her handkerchief to the Saviour to wipe His brow as He toiled up the Mount of Calvary, under the burden of the cross, and who, on receiving it again, found the divine countenance stamped thereon, there have been many paintings. The original napkin, or what remains of it, is treasured in St. Peter's, Rome, an unapproachable relic. This

ESPINOSA. — CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS.

was long claimed as the earliest and only authentic portrait of the Christ, but must be regarded as wholly legendary. Correggio has a striking attempt to portray the idea, a shadowy face of the Saviour crowned with thorns on a painted napkin. There is a strong touch of very early German realism in Ittenbach's reproduction of the Veronica napkin, although the canvas bears the date 1876 in one corner. The picture is in Berlin.

There is a strength of suffering in the theme of the Cross-bearing that has been the key-note of all representations of it, and they are many and important. This was carried by the earlier masters in some instances to the pitch of revolting cruelty.

A resurrection of this early manner, and a most startling bit of realism, about which nine persons out of ten will fall into cavil at once, is Jean Beraud's Le Chemin de la Croix, which was painted

in Paris in 1894. When exhibited, the picture provoked a tumult of comment as somewhat in advance even of the realism which had marked such a considerable innovation in religious painting for a generation. The figure of the Saviour bending to the point of prostration beneath the weight of the cross was deemed pathetic and proper from a conventional standpoint, but the Parisian mob in nineteenth century clothes that followed him was regarded as somewhat unholy.

There is in this group almost every type of modern Parisians, who, as the faces keenly indicate, belong to the skeptical persuasions. There is the philosopher, the mystic, the anarch, the Jew, and the freethinker. In the rear are seen a lady and gentleman in full evening dress, undoubtedly representing the mere votaries of pleasure, who apparently are just returning from an entertainment, and

have stopped to jeer with the mob. Great stones are flung, and those immediately behind press the burden down upon the Christ's back. The sense of brutal persecution of the central figure is almost intolerable.

As a contrast to this scene, however, the painter has introduced a group of a very different character, who await the Cross-bearer at the right hand of the road. It is a crowd quite as motley in composition, but also of the one general character. In the immediate foreground an aged man in the throes of death is supported by a young priest who calls upon him to rally for a last look upon the suffering Saviour, — an ideal death indeed! A young bride in her veil and flowers kneels beside her husband and invokes the benediction. A wounded soldier just behind the pair stretches forth imploring hands. Beside him, a criminal

with chains dangling from his arms has the same gesture. A widow, full-suited in weeds, bends humbly in the throng. Two little boys supported by a nun are being taught to pray as the Saviour passes by. Artisans and menials are seen in the background in attitudes of reverence.

Whatever may be denied to this remarkable work as religious art, it cannot be studied long without calling forth all the meaning of the theme. It is up to the present moment the most striking adventure in realism the nineteenth century has known, and it is difficult to conceive while in its presence how the genre can be extended very much farther.

The earliest painters of the procession to Calvary usually took their choice between Jesus and Simon as the bearer of the cross. If it was desired to impress the beholder with the dignity of Christ's

presence in this one of His very darkest hours, Simon was introduced. If the idea of supreme suffering was sought to be made prominent, our Lord was seen toiling beneath the burden. The latter has been the choice of most painters. Sometimes, however, as in the early examples of Giotto in the Arena Chapel frescoes at Padua, of Ghiberti in his bronze gates, and of Fra Angelico in the Florence Academy of Fine Arts, He is represented as serene and calm under the weight of the tree, and even as comforting the Virgin, the Magdalen, and the other weeping women who walk beside Him, overcome with sorrow.

The serenity of the first great painters in the handling of this scene was almost rudely disturbed very shortly after the true Renaissance began. An entirely new type of picture that specially accentuated the note of mental and physical suffering

in the principal actor was now developed. The Italian painters, and those of the Northern schools who usually followed the lead of the Southern masters in the general motif, seemed almost to vie with one another in representing the extreme degradation of the Saviour on His way to crucifixion. There is a typical example of this manner of treatment in the Verona Gallery, by Morando. Lucas Van Leyden goes the length of realism in depicting one of the soldiers striking the Saviour, who has fallen prone upon the ground, while another one is handling Him roughly.

To illustrate to what remarkable extremes religious art is sometimes carried, — albeit in a somewhat opposite direction to the one just recorded, — I would call attention to a remarkable piece, entitled Calvary, by Aertszen, in the Gallery at Berlin, which many of my readers may

have had the good fortune to see. The landscape is a beautiful German country, winding slowly up to an eminence on which the cross is planted. In the right foreground is a group of country people in and about a wain loaded with good things, who have come out as if to a spectacle or merrymaking. The horses have been taken out and are tethered, and the company are settling themselves as for a day's outing. In the left foreground, one of the thieves is seen approaching, with bowed head, on a very stupid and unwilling ass, which is being forced along by a stout centurion, whose Roman costume strikes a very incongruous note as the only one of the period in the whole foreground of the composition. Near the centre of the picture, another thief, nearly naked, reclines in a cart driven by a man in a Middle Age costume. Higher up, the Christ has just fallen under the weight

of the cross, and is being beaten by two lusty centurions with enormous staves. The rest of the way to the summit is strewn with monks, sightseers, and peddlers of eatables and drinkables. It is a crowded and vivid composition, doubtless all human enough and all true enough in a sense, but as far from suggesting conventional religious sentiment as any of the pictures painted by a certain class of Venetian masters to please the vanity and satisfy the taste of the nobles.

There are pictures of the Ascent to Calvary by several of the great masters. One that is notable by Tintoretto is in the series of frescoes in the Cathedral of San Rocco, Venice; one, attributed to Raphael, a somewhat formal composition for that great master, whose location I am unable to give; and one in the Brussels Museum, by Rubens.

Of easel pictures after the type of the

PIOMBO. — CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS.

Ecce Homo, a large number were made during the Renaissance. These present usually the solitary figure of the Saviour, crowned with thorns, and grasping the cross on His shoulder.

The very first representation of the crucifixion itself, of which undoubtedly more pictures have been painted than of any other single subject in Art, is in ivory, a carving on a small tablet that is preserved as a priceless relic in the British Museum. This is attributed to about the fifth century. One of the illuminated manuscripts of the Dark Ages, the Syriac Gospel, contains a well worked out scene for so early a period. The book is in the Laurentian Library, Florence.

It will not do to pass by in this connection the picture known to the masses of civilisation as the Elevation of the Cross, which, in its permanent place in the Ant-

werp Cathedral, has been for three centuries one of the chief glories of the Flemish people, as it is also conceded to be one of the greatest works of Rubens.

Crucifixion was the general punishment among the Romans for slaves who committed theft, and was always conducted by a detail of the soldiery. The hands and feet of the victim were nailed to the cross, with a supporting bar between the legs at the middle of the body. Death was supposed to come in about three days from lesions brought about by the horribly unnatural position of the body. Renan, in his "Life of Jesus," however, estimates that Christ, who was of a highly sensitive organisation, and already much worn by the Agony, died at the end of three hours from the rupture of a blood-vessel.

In most of the early Crucifixions, including a large number of the finest altar-

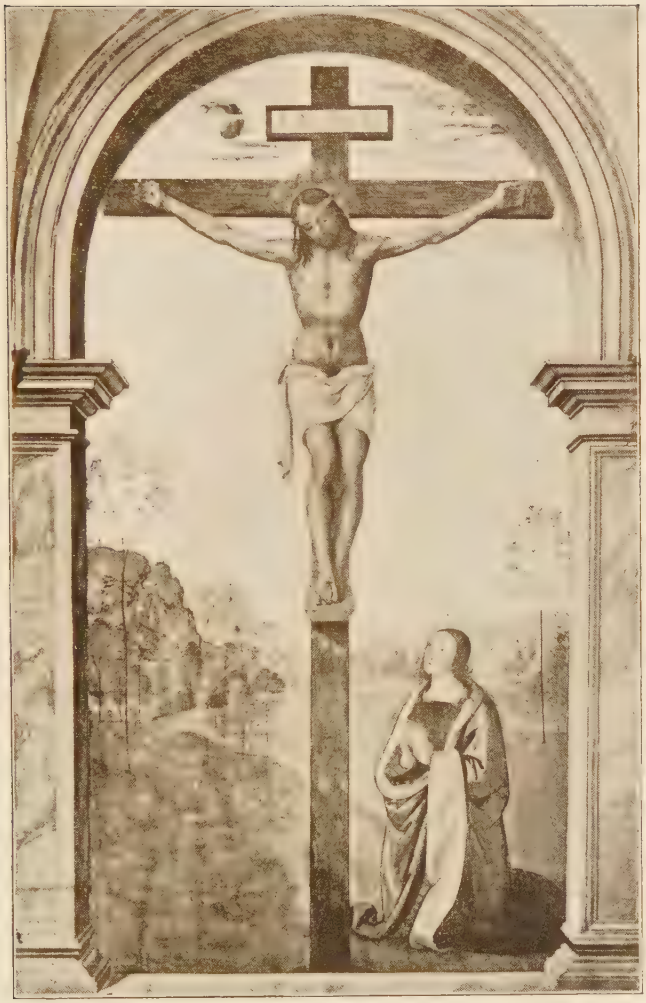
pieces painted for Italian churches of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries especially, the scene always occupies the central place of honour, and is surrounded frequently with a detail of saints. Angels are always introduced as poised beneath the arms of the cross, holding in outstretched hands a cup to catch the blood from the nailed hands of the Saviour. Sometimes four angels are represented, each holding a cup to one of the wounds. Again the angel at the left arm performs the double office of catching the blood both from the hand and the left side.

In the Gospel Books, in the mosaics, and in all representations up to the thirteenth century, the figure of the Christ on the cross is invariably draped from the loins downward.

To the preachings of that inspired monk and man of miracles, St. Francis of Assisi, is attributed a special develop-

ment of interest in the subject as an art motive. Very soon after his time we begin to find genuine historical representations. All the figures spoken of in the Gospels are introduced, much prominence being given to the Virgin, and even the soldiers are seen in the foreground casting lots for the garments of the Crucified One. And since the very earliest examples we find one or more groups of hovering angels also. The aspect of the Christ in each and all of the first Crucifixions painted was that of intense suffering. No note of the final triumph is at all suggested. The Renaissance added to this general ideal a careful attention to anatomy in the figure of the Saviour, and occasionally a more enlightened idea in His expression, suggesting sometimes the pathos of great resignation.

The picture of Bernardino Luini, at



PERUGINO. — CRUCIFIXION (CENTRAL PANEL).

Lugano, is one of the first examples that satisfies the modern sense of treatment. It is indeed considered one of the great religious paintings of all time, and has for several generations been the object of special pilgrimages by students of religious art.

On the walls of the great churches in Italy, the Crucifixion was frequently represented in a more idealised style, the artist choosing such single figures or groups as best suited his particular conception of the theme for adoration by the people. The Virgin, the Magdalen, and one or more saints are usually seen in such representations. A valuable example of this class is the famous fresco by Perugino in the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, in Florence. This consists of three arched panels, the figure of the Christ stretched upon the cross in the central one, at the right the

Virgin and St. Bernard, and in the other space St. Benedict and St. John, and will answer the general description of a large number of Crucifixions thus painted in the Italian churches at the time of the Renaissance.

Fra Angelico's Crucifixion, his grand fresco for the Sala del Capitolo, now preserved in the Museum of San Marco at Florence, is calm, gloomy, yet full of sincere pietistic feeling. The thieves, to point the contrast with the central figure, who is in the last stages of emaciation, are plump, well-conditioned fellows. There is no attempt at a dramatic portrayal of the scene. It is a severely religious piece, containing, besides Mary and the Disciples in stereotyped attitudes, a number of the martyrs of the early Church. This is, however, like any of Fra Angelico's pieces, a work that will induce a markedly devout impression in

every observer so long as it remains decipherable, and its immediate effect when it was first unveiled must have been very powerful. It is semi-circular in shape, and was probably employed as a lunette.

Michael Angelo painted a Crucifixion after the manner which has since become so stereotyped, — the single figure stretched upon the cross. There is nothing in any sense unusual in the work, either in conception or treatment, except a skull reposing between two thigh-bones at the foot of the cross. But the influence that this, one of the very earliest of the single figure conceptions, coming from so great a hand, must have had on future painters, was doubtless very great. It may have set the pattern, for nearly every succeeding master has at least one Crucifixion in this style, down to the seventeenth century.

Dürer's single figure of the Crucifixion

is, in the attitude, and especially in the carefully studied countenance of the Saviour, one of the very best renderings of the whole theme. Canon Farrar remarks, from the standpoint of the churchman,[1] "If it be lawful to paint this subject at all it could hardly be done better than Dürer has done it." This artist also has two crowded and unforgetable scenes representing the Crucifixion in his Greater and Lesser Passion series.

Tintoretto found in the scene on Calvary his most splendid opportunity as a religious painter. No less than three great pictures are known to have been painted by this master, all of which are in Venice. He regarded the theme from the standpoint of high tragedy, and has given us stirring and awful compositions. The fresco of San Rocco seems to be by

[1] "The Life of Christ in Art."

general consent of all authorities the most important one. Ruskin sums up his description by saying, "I must leave this picture to work its will on the spectator, for it is beyond all analysis and above all praise." Although the cross bearing the Saviour is alone elevated, and the sacrifice of the thieves is in active preparation, there is a gloom pervading the whole scene that suggests the "darkness that fell" only after the crosses had been for some time set up. It is this special feeling that is the key-note of its power, which is well sustained in every detail as the eye wanders from group to group.

It is a crowded and various composition, the supreme note of which is the shadow of awful tragedy. Of all the old masters, Tintoretto has unquestionably best succeeded in rendering this important, one might almost say final, motive in the handling of one of the crowning

themes of religious art. There is little space in this brief summary to dilate on great pictures, but it seems to me one could not exhaust in a whole day spent before it the feeling of power that is conveyed by this superb work.

The Crucifixion of Rubens (not the single figure reproduced here, but a composition of which there are several replicas), as might be expected of this master in whom the sense of life was like the ever-swollen joyous flood of a mighty river, is first of all a robust and splendid figure of the Christ Himself. But a glance at the countenance, serious in the depth of agony, only again sets the seal on the genius of Rubens. The muscular, splendid figure is not forgotten, but an ineffable sense of the supremest possible human woe is also unforgetably stamped upon the beholder. Here is the power of Rubens, which was

RUBENS. — CRUCIFIXION.

never for one moment of a distinctly religious cast. He is to most of us of the earth, earthy, and as such he satisfies. The agony of the thieves is well rendered. The Christ is dead, with the pathos of great suffering set upon His countenance. But the thieves live, and each is writhing in dire agony. The contrasting groups below, assembled with a masterly sense of effect in the arrangement of attitude and line, are a couple of soldiers on horseback, one of whom lifts a spear to pierce the side of the lorn Saviour; and the Virgin, another female figure, and John, who are depicted in beautifully despairing attitudes of grief. Mary Magdalen, — the ideal figure, — with long showering blonde tresses, is kneeling at the bleeding feet of the Saviour.

The pictures of Rubens considered as religious art belong in a class by them-

selves. Concerning the great — for till the colours fade out entirely it will remain so in a very opulent sense — Descent from the Cross, in the Antwerp Cathedral, there has always been much debate, many for generations past even going so far as to declare that it has no fitting place in an edifice dedicated to religious worship. But the work of Rubens is so remarkably human that it can never be lost sight of, — will always remain a glory of Art, — and certainly it cannot by even the most devout dogmatist be honestly set down against this master that he endeavoured to serve religion. In his own particular sphere Rubens has conveyed his own important message. To all the world with a trumpet voice he has proclaimed the splendour, the power, of the human form, and the sense of the opulence of life lived — as his own was — from beginning to end on the grand

GUIDO RENI. — CRUCIFIXION (DETAIL).

plane. It is a sufficient service, and his message even as a religious painter will undoubtedly grow in power and importance with the centuries.

Van Dyck, his greatest pupil, painted several Crucifixions. To the last scenes in the life of Christ he seems somehow to have been inevitably attracted. His religious subjects do not sustain his fame, however. But of interest to the visitor is at least one important example of the Crucifixion, now preserved in the Antwerp Museum.

The Renaissance, in its impassioned search for the ideal, early fixed on the simple figure stretched on the cross as the highest form of representation. So Guido Reni and all the seventeenth century masters following the time painted it. His best example is in the Church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, Rome, — a grand work.

A very few modern masters have dared to return to the earliest style of crowded composition. Of these the paintings of Verestchagin and Munkacsy most readily occur. The rendering of the latter is, like Tintoretto's, a scene of gloom. The "darkness" has fallen; the crowd is preparing to leave; the Son of Man is slowly dying upon the tree; the thieves are beginning to feel the awful physical pangs of the torture. The chiefs of the sects are seen retiring in the foreground, discussing the event with solemn faces. The soldier who has pierced His side holds his spear at rest, gazing with sad, serious face upon the Saviour. The group at the foot of the cross are in an agony of still suffering. The note is quiet, intense, and dramatic in the extreme, but more than all, gloomy, as was the essential cast of mind of possibly the greatest genius in modern re-

ligious painting, — now, alas! clouded for ever.

The Crucifixion of A. Morot, a Frenchman, painted within a few years, is a most admirable piece of execution. The figure is tied, not nailed, to the cross, and is evidently copied direct from the living model.

That intense spirit of realism that is one of the basic elements of Americanism has carried the idea of the single figure crucifixion so far in our own country that at least two notable examples of photography direct from the living person are known to connoisseurs. These have been produced within the past five years, and, aided by the recent rapid progress in the discovery of the physical laws governing photography, which have indeed advanced it to something like the plane of an art, they possess a very genuine value.

Short indeed is the roll of American artists who have attempted the great theme of the Crucifixion. The painting of that name by Thomas Eakins will be recalled by art lovers of the past generation. This is a single figure piece in the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. It is a bit of realism in flesh painting that stamps itself unforgetably upon the beholder. Equally memorable is the strong sentiment conveyed by the glaring sun upon the lone figure set in a waste of sand. This is a powerful work, and atones for much shortcoming in religious art in America.

V.

CHRIST DEAD AND ARISEN

"'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my
flesh that I seek.
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it! Oh! Saul
it shall be,
A face like my face that receives thee; A man like
to me,
Thou shalt love, and be loved by for ever; a Hand
like this hand,
Shall throw open the gate of new life to thee! see
the Christ stand!"

— BROWNING.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST DEAD AND ARISEN.

THE note of gloom, the still note of tragedy, is somehow the dominant one in nearly all the pictures of the Entombment. The sufferings of the Saviour are ended. The simple and beautiful narrative of the begging of the body by St. Joseph of Arimathea comes on the soul like a restful calm. "It is finished" was the last cry of the Cross, and is the first honest note of the Pieta.

But this does not seem to be the dominant idea with most religious painters. The Deposition or Descent from the Cross was the scene chosen by

many of the earlier artists. Duccio, in his Passion series (Sienna Cathedral), to mention a very important first master of the art of painting, chose this part of the subject. Daniele Da Volterra, a pupil of Michael Angelo, and who is classed among the Decadents of the Renaissance, made his masterpiece of a Descent from the Cross. It is in the Church of the Trinita de Monti, Rome. Niccolo Pisano, who, to go back in the record of time a century or so, revived the art of sculpture, had a beautiful relief of the theme in a church at Lucca.

Fra Angelico chose to paint the Descent from the Cross rather than a gloomy Entombment. The picture, made in 1445 for the Church of Santa Trinita in Florence, is now among the treasures of the Florence Academy. And there are Depositions from the earliest work of the monks of the mediæval period in mosaic

RUBENS. — DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

and missal, down to the splendid painting of Rubens, the companion piece to his Elevation of the Cross, in the Antwerp Cathedral.

Mantegna, an early Renaissance master, who is full of the seriousness that is at the basis of true religious feeling, engraved the Descent. Rembrandt lingered even to etch it. The Dutch master also painted it, — a double service which he rendered to many of the sacred subjects to which he was most attracted, — and the latter picture is now one of the important works in the Munich Gallery.

Fra Filippo Lippi and Perugino collaborated on a work which, under this title, hangs in the Royal Gallery of Florence. It is full of a curious grotesquerie in the disposition and attitudes of the figures, but painted with much feeling and sincerity. The characteristic spiritual quality of Perugino's style is manifest here,

combined with Fra Lippi's intensity of feeling for the human quality. But there is no solidity to the picture as a whole. It is painted, even as to the countenances, with a confused sense of power, and the sense of activity in the participants, which is almost painful, destroys the true relative meaning of the scene.

Many of these old masters are of value largely in the historical sense, as contributors to the record of the progress of Art. Their works are the treasured possessions of the galleries of Europe, on account of the high general value to civilisation of the art of painting. And yet, most of them, despite the most glaring faults as measured by the canons of technique to-day, possess a still higher value than this. They are the record of the state of spiritual feeling and thought of the day when they were made. The exact status of current religious feeling can be traced

FRA BARTOLOMMEO. — DEPOSITION.

in the canvasses of the masters far easier by those who know how to read it than in any other way. These painters were in an important sense the soul of their time. Their greatest mission is as religious historians; but they render also contemporary manners, costume, character, so that there is not one of the most archaic and seemingly grotesque of the older works but has a religious, a historical, and a moral significance. This is the essence of the value of painting,—it gives us exactly, like poetry, in a simple form the souls of not one man, but of many. It is scarcely too much to say that the whole of the civilisation of his time is in the complete works of every important master.

Fra Bartolommeo's Deposition, in the Pitti Gallery, is, despite the sorrowful character of the subject, a painting of the rarest attractiveness to all lovers

of the beautiful. The sense of the scene is perfectly realised. The attitudes and expressions of the figures (there are only four) are absolutely ideal, full of deep yet chastened grief, while the whole composition shows the hand of a master of style in painting. Not so tragically mournful as many of the other Entombments, the painting is full of the charm of Italian art in its best period.

One of the great names in Northern art that the Flemings of to-day hold in particular estimation is that of Quentin Matsys, who began his life as a blacksmith, and whose picture of the Deposition, now hanging in the Antwerp Gallery, is held to be his chief work.

Of the Pieta, which is the general term for all pictures of the Dead Christ and His Mother, there is an enormous number and infinite variety of scenes, ranging over five centuries. Giotto, in the immortal (if

anything in the art of painting can be properly called so) series of frescoes in the Chapel of the Arena at Padua, depicted the Descent from the Cross and the Entombment together. Fra Angelico, in a second painting, followed his example, as did other lesser masters.

But with the dawn of really great art in painting, and the idealisation of the subject, — the easel picture, — the Entombment became a very carefully studied composition. Here again, as often before, it is the roll-call of the great masters in Art that is answered to.

We begin with Taddeo Gaddi, a contemporary of Cimabue, whose altar-piece of the subject is preserved to-day in the Florence Academy. Raphael handled the subject, as he seemed to do everything, for the especial benefit of the connoisseur, and has thus a beautiful painting in the Borghese Gallery at Rome. The picture

of Titian is an honestly great contribution to the subject, full of reverence and grief, although suggesting inevitably the splendour of manner of the Venetian school.

Roger Van Der Weyden has a Lamentation that is very serious. He gives us a Christ wasted by sorrows and the agony of the cross to the point of emaciation. From a pathological standpoint his Christ would evidently fulfil every condition. The face expresses in a masterly way the depth of agony that has just passed over. The picture is sorrowful, pathetic in the extreme, especially so far as the central figure is concerned, but appeals to no high sense of character. The Christ is too evidently from a peasant model and totally unvivified by any sense of high impulse. Poignant suffering is alone sought to be represented here. The Dead Christ in the Berlin Gallery is a

replica of this figure. The Mary in this latter composition is a strong figure, evidently painted, with great care, from a German matron of commanding beauty.

Van Der Weyden is wonderful in rendering the depths of a wholly human despair in the human countenance. The faces about the cross in his Crucifixion strike the beholder at once. The depth of forlorn sorrow depicted in the countenance of the Christ in this latter work is undoubtedly equal as a mere achievement to that of any contemporaneous master.

Caravaggio's Entombment, in the Vatican Gallery, is a very strong direct human rendering of the subject. There is no waste of material or idea in this example. The figures are all intensely concentrated both in attitude and expression. The grouping is masterful, and the whole composition beyond praise. The figures are rendered direct from carefully selected

models, and the whole feeling is contemporaneous. It is a scene studied from the current life of the painter, with a power, feeling, and freshness that make of it a masterpiece.

Carlo Crivelli's Entombment is a curious bit of early realism (Vatican Gallery). The expression common to all four faces in the work is one of strained agony that is grotesque even to the point of exciting humour. The gaping wounds and lean body of the Christ make this a very intense example of the earlier manner.

One of the earliest Entombments is the Gesu Morte of Girolamo Da Carpi now in the Pitti Gallery. It is a good example of the handling of a certain class of painters of the Renaissance who owed no fixed allegiance to any one particular school.

Francesco Francia's Entombment, a lunette in one of the Bolognese churches, is after the general manner of Fra Bar-

CARACCI. — PIETA.

tolommeo's work. It lacks the depth of feeling, however, and is in no sense so valuable a record of the theme. It is in the stereotyped manner in which so many contemporary Pietas were painted, and one that, it must be admitted, "composes" well. The reclining Christ is ministered to by His mother, the scene completed by two angels, one at either extremity.

Not wholly to slight the moderns, with whom the subject is yet a very scarce one, Professor Hofmann's In the Sepulchre strikes a new note among pictures in the Pieta series. A tall figure, presumably Joseph of Arimathea, stands holding the lifted cloth from the Saviour's face, who reclines on a slab, while His mother, kneeling on the other side, lingers for a last look. From the entrance of the rock-hewn cave three figures are seen departing, one of whom is Mary Magdalen.

Hofmann's Easter Morning — and I quote from him so often because he is, undoubtedly, the modern painter who has most nearly touched the general heart of the religious masses — is a most beautiful picture. The scene is in the half light of early morning, with Mary Magdalen a disconsolate figure at the door of the sepulchre. A majestic and beautiful apparition of the Saviour appears just in the background. This Presence, however, hardly carries out the idea of the gardener referred to in the only account given of the meeting, — that by St. John.

Angelico's so-called Descent from the Cross should evidently have been called an Entombment. There is no cross or suggestion of Calvary in the picture, and the Saviour, supported from behind by a stalwart aureoled male figure, seems just about to be laid in the tomb, which, hewn out of the living rock, is seen just behind.

The drapery that enwraps the lower portion of the Christ's body is very remarkable for a painting of this period, and shows that Fra Angelico could paint some things with a master's hand.

Renan closes his masterly "Life of Jesus" with the Entombment, and is inclined to regard the Resurrection and the following miraculous scenes from a materialistic standpoint. As a part of the record of sacred art, however, the Resurrection, the Appearance of the Angel to the Women at the Tomb, the Appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalen, the Walk to Emmaus, the Supper at Emmaus, the Incredulity of St. Thomas, and the Ascension have all been treated generally from the beginning.

The first really important example of the Resurrection is found in a panel of Ghiberti's Gates of the Baptistery at Florence. The early Renaissance masters, Duccio, Giotto, and the rest, handled the

scene with free realism, representing the Christ as actually coming out of the tomb, in some instances as standing on it. With the gradual idealisation of Art, this idea is presented in a more figurative sense. Titian's Christ soars high in mid-air. With some painters, as Perugino (Vatican Gallery, Rome), the tomb is rendered in the most conventional style of architecture; with others, as Leonardo Da Vinci, it is more naturally a rock-hewn cave. The earlier artists, with naïve simplicity, always placed a banner in the left hand of the ascending Christ, — the emblem of victory over the grave.

There has always been much contention in the various schools of criticism over the works of the old masters, but an example on which all, from Vasari, the first important art chronicler, to so late and valued an authority as John Addington Symonds, seem to be united, is the Resurrection of

Piero Della Francesca, a fresco in the Palace of the Conservators at Rome. The chief merit of the work, and the one that has secured the recognition of critics of all degrees, is the rare sense of naturalism in the portrayal of a man awakening from death to life, that the painter has succeeded in imparting to the central figure. This is a merit so absolute that it has been quite enough to preserve the work for special acclaim.

Tintoretto painted the Resurrection a number of times. His best example is a part of his great series of frescoes in the Church of San Rocco, in Venice. An important picture of the Renaissance era is the work of Annibale Caracci, now preserved in the Louvre, Paris. Dürer's picture should not be overlooked by any one who cares for this master. It is one of his most vivid and powerful conceptions. A beautiful example from the hand of

Fra Bartolommeo is in the Pitti Gallery, Florence.

The modern artists who have handled the subject are not many; Burne-Jones, perhaps, alone deserves immediate mention. This deep interpreter has made it the subject of a window in Hopton Church, England.

The Angels at the Tomb will be passed over as having no place in this brief summary of pictures devoted to the portrayal of the Saviour Himself.

Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen, the theme known in the Catholic Church under the title "Noli Me Tangere," from the words recorded by St. John, "Touch Me not! for I am not yet ascended to My Father," is also a splendid example of the very important labours of Burne-Jones in religious art.

To return to something like chronological order, the theme is well known in

Correggio. — Noli Me Tangere.

mediæval art. Thence following, we have the pictures of Giotto and Duccio in the two series before often referred to. The example by Mantegna is preserved in the National Gallery, London. Correggio, the essence of whose soul was the dream of the beautiful, could not be restrained from so apposite a subject as this, which included also the Magdalen. His picture hangs in the Prado Gallery, Madrid, and has the special merit of being a truthful conception of the scene according to strict latter-day notions.

The Walk to Emmaus, also called the Meeting at Emmaus, has been treated by comparatively few painters even down to the latest times. To mention one of the earliest pictures, Fra Angelico's, called the Meeting at Emmaus, consists of a very fine and living head of the Christ, who is carrying the staff of a pilgrim. The two men are cowled and shorn monks, and

are doubtless brother cloisterers of the painter himself.

Hofmann has a Walk to Emmaus in his series of Bible illustrations treated in his usual serious, dignified manner. Here the Christ is carefully studied as one newly risen from the dead, and the figure is very impressive. The strangers are both questioning Him earnestly, one having laid his hand upon His shoulder, while the other is grasping Him by the wrist.

The theme of the Supper at Emmaus seems to have found more favour for very simple and natural reasons; yet it is to the Venetian school alone that we must turn for the first important examples. As in the Adoration of the Kings and the Marriage at Cana, here was an affected opportunity for the portrayal of opulent contemporary life. Far from the mark of general religious feeling is such

an idea, and yet we cannot pass over certain splendid paintings by the Venetian masters, which are important as contributions to the history of Art. It is true that there is nothing in the sacred narrative that indicates the environment of the scene, and this fact left Veronese and his contemporaries quite unhampered by ecclesiastical restrictions. We have the simple touching scene, therefore, under the hand of these men of their time, transformed into a banquet.

One of the most restrained of these compositions is the altar-piece of Carpaccio, in the Church of San Salvatore, Venice. Utterly and intentionally ideal from the purest standpoint of Venetian civilisation is the figure of the Christ here. His four companions, attired in varying costumes, are unquestionably contemporary portrait figures of Venetian nobles. The setting is a simple but splen-

did apartment with variegated marble columns. The fare is substantial and rich, though not remarkably profuse. The table alone strikes an incongruous note in the general scheme, being only a simple board supported on four meagre sticks of wood, and covered with but a scant cloth. There is certainly religious sentiment of a certain kind in the attitude and mien of the Saviour here, but the rest of the picture is to the modern sense only curious to the point of grotesquerie.

Veronese quite outdoes Carpaccio. He indeed painted his own household in a superlative setting of magnificence. The painting of Marco Marziale, which hangs in the Venice Academy, is another interesting example of this class.

Titian introduced the Emperor Charles V., the Cardinal Ximenes, and other of his distinguished patrons into the scene. The picture is now in the Louvre, Paris.

PALMA VECCHIO. — SUPPER AT EMMAUS.

Rubens, who yielded naturally to the influence of the Venetian masters, has an example much in their general manner now in the Prado Gallery in Madrid.

Rembrandt seems to have been honestly touched by the legend in its deeper meanings. His painting in the Louvre, Paris, is much the most valuable to general civilisation of all the early modern works. He also etched the Supper at Emmaus several times.

Modern painters, generally speaking, seem to have found a ready inspiration in the subject. The works of Carl Müller, of Ford Madox Brown, and of a living French master, Dagnan-Bouveret, must be mentioned in this connection. There is also a striking and forceful work in the ultra-modern realistic style by L'Hermitte, which is now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

The Unbelief of Thomas holds quite

too important a place in the scheme of Christian morals to have been slighted in the least. There are many and beautiful pictures of this beautiful subject. It is to be remarked, however, with some sense of wonder, that none of them are later than Van Dyck. Not a single painter for more than two centuries has set his hand to a delineation of this tradition.

Among the most noteworthy works are two pictures by Cima da Conegliano, an important painter of the Venetian school. One of these, an altar-piece, now in the Venice Academy, is especially valuable to connoisseurs as a typical example of the artist's style, although it contains, perhaps, but little that would satisfy the ordinary observer. Dürer's picture in the Little Passion series includes the entire group of the Apostles. The painting of Rubens, in the Antwerp Gallery, contains but three figures, Christ, Thomas, and Peter. It is

a splendid example of this master's style. Van Dyck follows his preceptor closely in composition and general treatment. This example is preserved in the Hermitage Collection at St. Petersburg.

With the Ascension the scene closes, and the curtain falls on the greatest human panorama of two thousand years. To the true Christian believer it were supererogatory to paint this scene; but it has, nevertheless, been done a number of times.

The most important work in sculpture is from the hand of Luca Della Robbia, who rendered all things with that combination of sincerity and feeling which gives him an honest claim to immortality.

From the idealisers, like Perugino, to the first real romanticists, like Tintoretto, the Ascension includes but a comparative few of the most important names in the history of painting.

Canon Farrar, in his copious work,[1] the most important contribution in English to the general subject, treats this motive but scantily, as a dissenting churchman must.

The great work of Correggio, as all the religious paintings of this master, must ever remain an important example. It is in the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista, Parma. There is a well-known delineation by Andrea Mantegna, preserved in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

To bridge the span of the centuries, it is an important fact that the most notable work of the greatest religious artist in America, John La Farge, is a grand fresco devoted to this theme in the Church of the Ascension in New York City. This is, as well, the most important religious painting in the Western Hemisphere.

[1] "The Life of Christ as Represented in Art."

MANTEGNA. — ASCENSION (DETAIL).

But I must bring to a close this brief essay in a task that is really stupendous. It is enough for my purpose, if I have stirred the soul of the reader only here and there with some reference to a great picture. Enough, if I have in some imperfect sense added to the record of the great fact, that the ineradicable feeling for the beautiful in mankind, which is the essence of all Art, has for at least five centuries been at the complete service of the divine ideal.

THE END.

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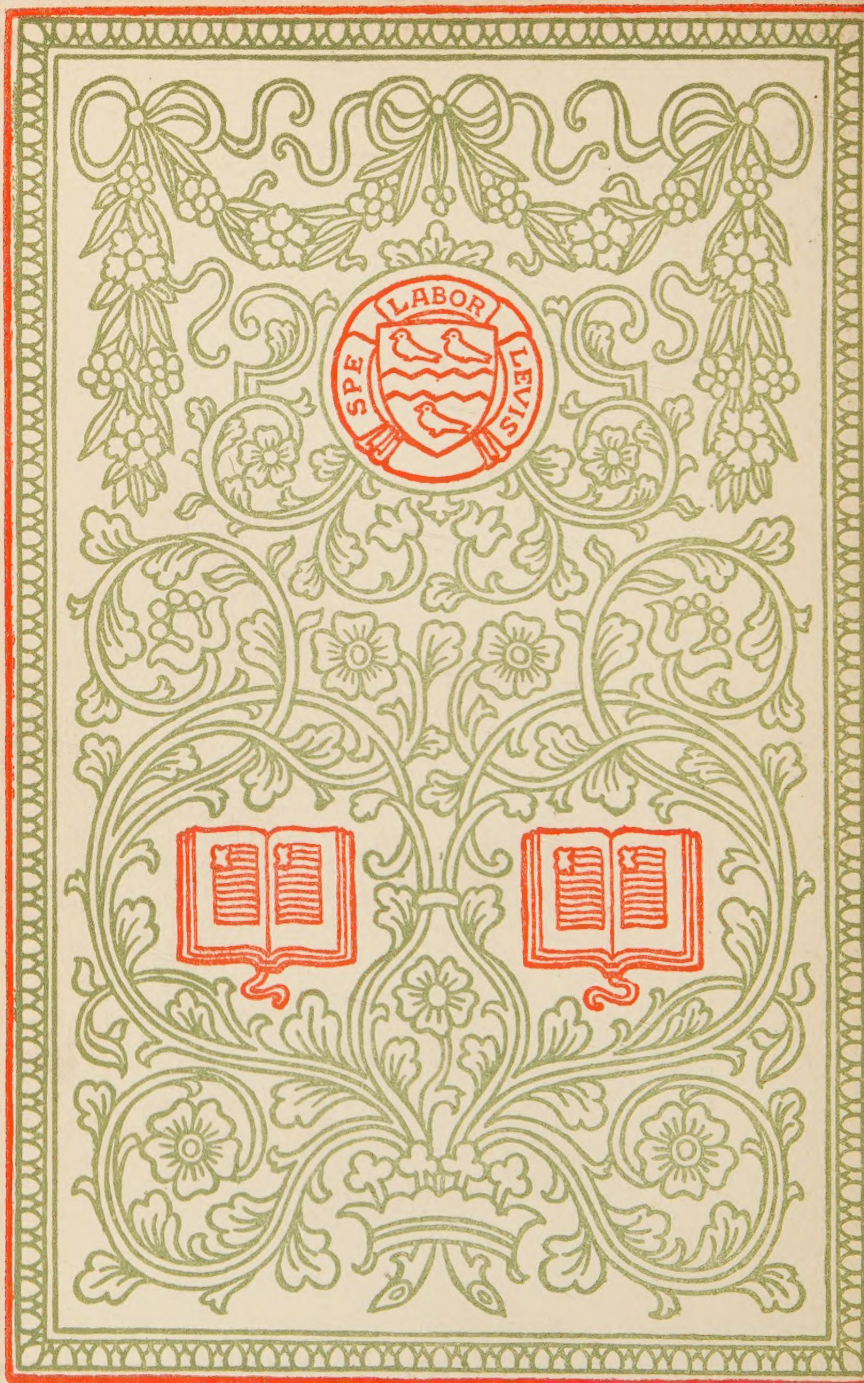
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